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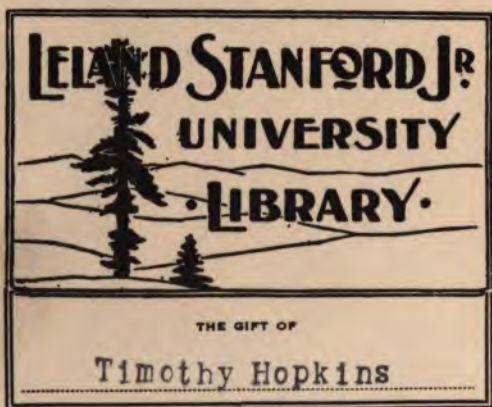
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# THE CHILD FEEL

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, D. D.



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# THE CHILD JESUS

And Other Talks to the Children

BY

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, D.D.

AUTHOR OF

"TALKING TO THE CHILDREN," "THE GENTLE HEART,"  
"THE CHILDREN'S PORTION," ETC.

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УДАВАЛІ ОБОГНАТЭ

## INTRODUCTION

THE three volumes to children already published by Dr. Macleod have been so well received that it was thought advisable to collect the materials he left behind (some of which appeared in the *Sunday Magazine*), and arrange them into book form for a fourth volume.

If not the first, Dr. Macleod was one of the first to recognise children as members of the Church and therefore part of the congregation, and he always prepared a short address specially for them which was given at morning service.

Dr. Macleod had a peculiarly kind manner with all people he met with, and particularly so with children. Children claimed him as

a friend whether they knew him or not. He had always something pleasant to say to them, a description of some place he had seen, or an event on a journey, or perhaps a fairy tale improvised for their amusement, but oftener still an inquiry about their lessons and progress at school.

One of the duties he was frequently called upon to do was, to distribute the prizes at schools, and on such occasions, after congratulating those who received prizes, he would turn to those who got none, and with a smile tell them how heartily he sympathised with them, for that during all his school days he never once had a prize himself, although he had both longed and hoped for one. And long years afterwards more than one young man reminded him of his speech, and said how glad he had been to hear it, and had felt inspired to greater activity and determination to work.

Although he could tell them of his disappointment in his school-boy days, yet no one ever heard him speak of being the Gold Medallist of his year at the Glasgow University, or of the high prizes he gained while a student there.

He was a lover of poetry, and especially of hymns, and could tell many instances where the remembrance of a good hymn had a wonderfully soothing effect in comforting souls in distress. And in his talks to the children he frequently advised them to store their memory with the best hymns, and assured them they would prove a good investment in years to come.

And in closing this brief introduction, it may interest the readers to know that the last chapter he wrote for children was the one entitled "A Door in Heaven."

ELIZABETH MACLEOD.



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# THE CHILD JESUS

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### THE CHILD JESUS

ALTHOUGH I have often spoken to you about Jesus, I have never spoken about Him as a Child.

But this is one of the things best worth speaking about in Jesus.

He was the pattern Child. Do you want to know what kind of child God wishes you to be? I answer: He wishes you to become a child like Jesus—like the *Child* Jesus.

When Jesus became a Man, there were some things about Him and in Him which many people did not like.

Bad people did not like His goodness; evil-doers did not like the terrible sermon in which He spoke against their evil deeds.

Some people did not like His poverty. Others did not like the way in which poor people and sick people came flocking about Him for comfort and healing.

But when He was a Child, everybody liked Him. All the time of His childhood He grew in favour with God and man.

I gather from that that His childhood was a beautiful time of His life, and that He was a good, true, simple, loving Child.

It is said: "He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him."

He grew as you are growing, and it is a very beautiful sight to see the baby growing into the child, and the child growing into the girl or boy.

But sometimes alongside of that growth other things grow which are not beautiful; sometimes a naughty spirit or rude speech or self-will or self-seeking grows, and people who want to admire the lovely hair and cheeks and eyes and limbs cannot do that, because they see self looking out of the eyes,

and pride tossing the head, and rudeness making gestures with hands or feet. In such a case there may be the growth of a beautiful outside, but also the growth of an unbeautiful spirit.

Now in the Child Jesus both the inside and the outside growths were beautiful. He grew, and, we are told, He waxed strong in spirit.

Another beautiful thing in the Child Jesus: He was filled with wisdom. That means, for one thing, He began to ask: Why has God sent Me into the world?

It means that He began to read and understand the Scriptures.

It means that He began to look around and to think what the stars were saying, and the lilies, and the birds, and the wheat, and the corn, and the tares.

And there was another beautiful thing in His childhood: His obedience to His parents.

There was in Him no conceit, only humility. He was wise, and did not know it. He was wise, and was not proud about it.



Everybody liked to be near Him, I am sure, and the old people would say: There is winsome grace in this Child.

## *BAPTISM*

**T**O-DAY I wish to say a word to you  
about yourselves.

It is a word which I have had on my  
heart for a long while to say.

Have you ever thought, when you have  
seen a baby baptized, that you too have been  
baptized?

And if you have thought of it, have you  
wished to know what your being baptized  
means for you?

1st. It means that when your father and  
mother received you, at your birth, they felt  
that you had been sent to them from God,  
and they promised you back to God: the  
baptizing was the promise of your parents  
to God: We will bring up this child for  
Thee.

2nd. It means: baptized into the name of God, naming you unto God; you belong to God; you are children of God.

3rd. It means that the Church here received you into its membership.

You are members of the Christian Church; you are members very dear to God. He likes to see you here. He likes to hear your voice in the song of praise. He likes to feel your heart going out to Him in the prayers.

4th. Your being baptized is a thing outside of you as yet. It does not save you. It is Christ who saves you. But Christ says: You have My name: be My child: worship in spirit and in truth now. Think of it, and ask whether it means anything to you.

## THE LITTLE ONE

*Matt. xix. 13*

AND is it true what I am told,  
That there are *lambs* within the fold  
Of God's beloved Son?  
That Jesus Christ, with tender care,  
Will in His arms most gently bear  
The helpless "little one"?

Most true! I've heard my mother say,  
*He* never sent a child away  
That scarce could walk or run;  
For when the parent's love besought  
That He would touch the child she brought,  
He blessed "the little one."

And I, a little straying lamb,  
May come to Jesus as I am,  
Though goodness I have none:  
May *now* be folded to His breast,  
As birds within the parents' nest,  
And be "*His* little one."

And He will do all this for me,  
Because in sorrow on the tree  
    He once to death was done ;  
He died to wash my sins away,  
He lives to save, and day by day  
    He guides "His little one."

Then, by this gracious Shepherd fed  
And by His mercy gently led  
    Where living waters run,  
My greatest pleasure will be this,  
That I'm a little lamb of His  
    Who loves "the little one."

Christ knows His lambs, and they know  
His voice and follow Him.

## *THE BIBLE*

WHEN I was in London lately, I spent one evening with a very learned friend, a Jewish doctor. He showed me a splendid new Hebrew Bible with a new translation and hundreds of Doré's illustrations, which he had just purchased. This led us to talk about the Bible and its influence, and in the course of our talk my friend recalled to memory a toast that was drunk to in Scotland when he was a lad at college. The toast was this: "A clean sword and a dirty Bible." Now a toast is a sort of prayer. It is the expression of a wish, and in that sense we may understand it to-day.

"A clean sword": that is the wish that wars are to end, and peace prevail all over the world. That is a right wish to have,

that there should be no more bloodshed, no more fighting between nations. I fear we are still far away from such a state. But yet it is our duty to wish and pray for that good time.

Now, although it was an old-fashioned way of speaking to say "a dirty Bible," yet you must not suppose it was the least disrespectful. Not at all; it simply meant a well-thumbed Bible, a Bible often handled, often read, frequently referred to, the commonly used book of a Bible-loving people.

It is a fine thing to see a handsome new Bible, with pictures, and gilt edges, and clasped boards, but it is better to have a Bible constantly used, often opened and read, even though the edges are frayed and the pages dimmed.

Some time ago we had an Indian officer addressing a religious meeting in our Hall. He told us he had been careless and foolish in his youth, and when he was leaving home to join his regiment his father gave him a Bible, but he never read it: he forgot

that he had it for years, till he was wounded and sick and set aside. Then in his loneliness he began to read his Bible, and a new light dawned upon him, and he was converted to God. He said: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy Word."

Suffering may fall on any one of you; you may be laid on a sick-bed. You may even be called, young though you are, to die.

What would help you to suffer nobly? Only this, to have begun early to walk humbly with God.

At a meeting of the Bible Society, which I attended some years back, the following incident was mentioned:—

The body of a youth, seventeen years of age, was washed ashore. He had gone out on the rocks to read, in preparation for Oxford, and, immersed in study, must have been unconscious of the rising of the tide till it was too late to escape. On the fly-leaf of his pocket Bible, found upon him, he



had written, in a bold firm hand, the following words: "In danger, I now declare that I do trust in Jesus as my own Saviour, and I have trusted Him for about five years. I know that my sins of heart and of action are many and grievous, but I do pray to God to forgive me for the sake of the perfect righteousness of Christ and to receive me in safety and holiness with Himself. I pray God that He will bless my father and mother, and give them His Holy Spirit, and keep my brother and sisters in His faith and fear." How forcibly this touching incident proves the fidelity of God to His Word. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

## EXODUS

### FIRST LESSON

#### *Exodus i.*

I AM sure I do not need to tell you the story of Joseph. But I must recall one thing to you—that if he was sold into Egypt, it was by his brothers he was sold.

Now this evil was in the hearts of those brothers, and of their children, and the good God made things work together so that *their* children should see the evil of it.

He suffered them to be captives themselves in a strange land.

The children of the men who sold Joseph became slaves.

It is a long time ago from now.

But it was a long time even then since Joseph was sold, it was 400 years.

When Joseph's brethren sold him they were living in Judea, and were shepherds.

And for long years after Joseph became ruler, and brought them to Egypt, they were still shepherds, in number 70 souls.

But in 400 years the 70 had grown to be more than 70,000—more than 100,000 men; a great army.

And the Egyptians began to be afraid; they said, "If we should be at war, perhaps these strong shepherds might join the enemy, and fight against us, and take our lands."

Now the kings of Egypt were great builders, and they built with bricks.

So they said: "We will put these shepherds into the brickfields, and make them bake bricks for us."

And this was done.

And men were set over them with whips. And if they did not turn out so many bricks every day, they were beaten and lashed with the whip. And that made life very bitter. And they cried to God.

And God heard their cry.

And God answered their cry. He made them grow in numbers. He made them stronger and stronger every day.

But when the king of Egypt saw that, he said: "Let us take the babes whom their God sends to them and kill them.

"Not all the babes. Only the boy-babes, who might grow up to be soldiers and fight against us."

But when the king gave that order, the women to whom he gave it said it was too hard and cruel a thing to do.

And many of them refused to do it. And God blessed those nurses who refused.

But still it was the king's law. And many a beautiful baby-boy was killed by his cruel command.

And the people cried more bitterly than before to God. And God heard their cry, and began to come near to help them.

I. The first lesson for us here is that God is against those masters who are cruel to their servants.

The Egyptians were masters, and the

Hebrews were servants. And they were beaten, and got little or no wages, and life was made very sad to them.

II. God hears the cries of the slaves and poor servants.

### SECOND LESSON

*Exodus* ii. 1-10.

I TOLD you in our first lesson that God heard their cry.

The king of Egypt said. "Kill the baby-boys." The King of heaven and earth said: "By a baby-boy will I save My people Israel."

Now there was a good man among those brick-kiln workers, whom they called *Amram*. His wife's name was *Jochebed*. They had two children—a girl and a boy. The name of the girl was Miriam, ten years old, and the boy was Aaron. Then just as this cruel law was passed they got another baby, a boy. "Oh," said the mother, "shall I let

this dear child be killed by that wicked, cruel king?"

So she hid him—it is not told where—for three months. Then she made a little basket-cradle house, and painted it all over with pitch until every hole was filled up and no water could come in.

And in this ark she laid her baby. Then she hid it among the rushes by the river's edge.

Oh, I have often thought of that hiding-place; there would be serpents and crocodiles there sometimes. But the Hebrew mother said: The creatures are not so cruel as the king of Egypt.

So Moses was hid there.

Now when God wants to do anything He makes all other things work together for that end.

He wanted to make Moses a deliverer. He wanted him to go to the best school, and to know the people who could give deliverance to the Hebrews.

So just as the baby required to be taken

care of there was a tender-hearted princess in the king of Egypt's house.

And just as the baby was laid in the basket cradle at the riverside this tender-hearted princess came down to bathe.

And just as the princess looked on the baby there was a tear, a cry, from the child.

And that cry went to the heart of the princess. She said: "I will save this child."

But then she must have a nurse, and Miriam was there watching the child, and she called the mother.

So Moses was with his mother till he was nursed, and then he went to the house of Pharaoh.

### THIRD LESSON

*Exodus* ii. 10-15 ; *Acts* vii. 20-29 ; *Hebrews* xi. 24-27

NOTHING could be finer than the story of the princess finding the baby in the river and taking him to be her son.



She was a king's daughter, and the Hebrew baby was now a king's daughter's son.

And by-and-by the boy was taken to the palace, and dressed like a prince, and had servants to wait upon him, and chariots to ride in. And people bowed to him as he went along the streets. And he went to the king's sons' schools and colleges, and became a clever scholar, and by-and-by a learned man.

But all this time he was not happy.

Living in a king's palace, sitting at the king's table, riding in the king's carriages, attending the king's colleges, wearing the king's dress, did not make him happy.

When he rode out, or walked out, he would sometimes see the Hebrew people in the brickfields, and now and again he would hear the sound of the lash as the cruel taskmasters brought it down on the backs of the poor Hebrew slaves.

And then Moses would think of how he too was a Hebrew. He would think of Amram, of Jochebed, his father and mother,



of Miriam, of Aaron, and say, "Perhaps it will be their turn next. How can I see all this and ever be happy?"

Then another thought came into his mind. He began to think about his cradle by the riverside, and his being adopted by the princess, and his wonderful life, and he said: "God did all that.

"He put it into the heart of my real mother to hide me, and into the heart of my adopted mother to adopt me, and it is from Him that I have been made a prince and brought up in a king's palace."

And then he went on to think thus: "Did God order all these things to happen to me just *to make me happy*, only to make me an Egyptian prince? Did the God of the Hebrews put me where I am only to forget the Hebrews and that I am a Hebrew?"

No! no! no! He found the answer already in his soul.

"God put me into the king's house that I might help the Hebrews."

The day when Moses came to this thought

was a great day in his life. He saw that day that he was not born to be merely happy, but to know God and serve God, and to do good to his brothers and sisters.

And he said to himself:—

I will give myself to God, and to this work of God. I will use my learning and my wealth and my influence as a king's son to help the Hebrews.

"I am an Hebrew,  
And I will be called an Hebrew ;  
I belong to the God of the Hebrews,  
And Him only will I serve."

Now all this was most noble. It was so noble that men speak of it to this day. And it is praised in the Bible (Heb. xi. 24-27).

But he had many things to learn before he could be the helper which God wanted him to be.

And especially he had this to learn, that it is not right to do evil that good may come.

One day he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, and he killed the Egyptian.

Now a prince in Egypt might kill one of

the people, perhaps, and nobody would blame him. But still it was against the *law of God*. And it was therefore a sin.

What Moses thought was this:—

“I have killed the Egyptian to keep him from killing a Hebrew.” But still it was a wrong act for him to do. Or he might have said, and he did say: “By killing the Egyptian the Hebrews will see that God has raised me to be their deliverer.”

But still it was wrong. And God would not take service which had sin at the heart of it. So when Moses next went to see the Hebrews, and found two of them fighting, he said: “Do not fight; you are brethren.”

“Who are you,” they said, “to speak to us? You are a murderer.”

So Moses saw his great error, his great sin. He was not a deliverer at all. He was a slayer of men.

God wanted to make him a great lawgiver, and He led him to see that if any one is to serve God it must be by obeying, not by breaking, God's laws.

Moses now saw that he was not trusted by the Hebrews, and that Pharaoh would be angry with him for taking the Hebrews' side.

And he fled from the palace and from Egypt, and became a wanderer, and went into a land called Midian.

Now there are two lessons here for you:—

God has given you home, education, books, means, not to spend them on yourselves, but to serve Him.

And in serving God you must serve Him in His own way, not the devil's way; you must not do evil that good may come.

#### FOURTH LESSON

*Exodus* ii. 16-25

THE last lesson was Moses fleeing from Egypt in sorrow and disgrace, in danger and with loss.

To-day's lesson finds him an exile, with neither friends nor home, a stranger in a strange land.



Now the first thing we notice is this:—

His sorrows have not changed him. In his prosperity he thought of others more than of himself, and now in his trouble he is still thinking of others more than of himself.

He sees a band of strong men very rude and cruel to seven young girls: he defends the young girls and helps them.

The beautiful thing in Moses is, that he always helps the weakest.

And so he helps the women against the shepherds.

There is a beautiful way our English sailors have: in a shipwreck they help the women and the babies first.

They learned that from this book.

What a brave deed this was!

He was alone. And there would be a whole band of shepherds, but he did not stop to think of that.

Two lessons here: to *think of others*, and to *help the weak*.

A soldier in the American war had re-

ceived a wound in his mouth. When offered a drink from the one tin, he said: "No, my mouth would spoil it for others."

In our Crimean war the wounded soldiers often said: "Attend to others; there are others worse off than we are."

That is the way when the love of God is in the heart; it makes us think of and care for others.

Now what happened to Moses? By doing this kindness he got a new home.

#### FIFTH LESSON

##### *Exodus iii.*

AFTER Moses became a shepherd he had, I am sure, some very sad days. He could no longer help the poor children of Israel.

He was not a prince now; he was far away from home. There were no letters in those far-off times, no newspapers; only now and again a caravan and a chance Egyptian merchant, or a Jewish slave.

And the years were sliding past, and Moses was forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, then eighty years of age. A long time to wait. But though long, he never lost hope. He went on crying to God.

But this was what he was sometimes tempted to think: "Soon they will be all killed, or they will die of hard usage. Slavery will kill them." Always when he thought of them they appeared a poor, down-trodden, weak band.

But one day, going over the hill where his sheep were, he saw a poor little scraggy bush catch fire and blaze out on every side.

He thought: "It will soon be burned out"; but he looked and looked, and it was not getting any smaller; it was not burning away.

At last he went near to see, it was such a strange sight; and when he came near he heard a *Voice* coming to him from the bush.

It was the Voice of God. It said: "Moses, take the shoes off thy feet; thou art on holy

ground. I have heard the cry of the children of Israel, and I am going to send you to deliver them."

Moses said, "I am not able." God said, "I will help you."

Now *the Burning Bush*. What is it like? There was no Bible then; God taught by pictures and signs. Like great things and like little things; like God; like the Church; like a mother's love.

Although Moses was now an old man and a shepherd, he was still at school. It was the school kept by God. God was his Schoolmaster. And no schoolmaster has better lessons to give than God. Nor can any one teach better.

But the scholars in God's school are not always very sharp or willing to learn. Now Moses had been forty years at this school, on the sides of the great mountain Horeb. And all these forty years there were just two lessons he got to learn. one about himself, and one about God.

He learned the one about himself very



soon, and he learned it well. But he did not learn the lesson about God so soon.

What was the lesson about himself he had to learn? It was, that he was weak.

When he was a prince in Egypt, he thought he was strong. He said to himself: "I am Pharaoh's grandson; I am a prince in Pharaoh's house, and I am an Israelite too, and I shall deliver these Israelites from bondage."

But he was not able to deliver the Israelites from bondage. Trying to do it, he failed, and had to flee.

And the lesson about himself he needed to learn was, that he was not strong. Not strong, but weak. Well, at the end of forty years, he had learned that lesson.

When God said to him, "Go back to Egypt and deliver the Israelites," Moses said, "I am too weak; I am not able to do such work."

That was his humility. He thought very humbly of himself now

But the second lesson?

It was this. that *God* is strong; that nothing is impossible to God; that God can help one to do anything, even the most difficult thing.

Moses had this lesson still to learn, for God said to him: "Although you are yourself not strong, *I* will go down to Egypt with you; *I will help you.*"

But still Moses said: "Oh, my Lord, I am not able. I cannot speak. Send some one who can speak, rather than me."

Now God was angry with Moses for saying that. Why was He angry? Because that was doubting the power of God.

Moses was looking only to himself. He did not take into account that God was to be with him.

He did not see, did not believe, and did not realize, the power and strength of God.

Before, when he thought to be a deliverer, and killed the Egyptian, he went without waiting on God. Now he shrinks from going, although God is waiting to help him.

Once he was too forward; now he is too

backward. Before, showing presumption; now, showing fearfulness. But God was very kind. He gave him two signs to help him to learn this second lesson.

First, He gave him the sign of the rod and serpent.

Now what did all this mean? A shepherd leads his flock and delivers them out of pits and dangerous places. When a lamb falls into a pit, the shepherd puts down his crooked staff and helps it out.

God was saying to Moses: "Go and be the shepherd of Israel and lift them out of the pit."

Moses said: "If I attempt that, the Egyptian will kill me, and the children of Israel will not believe me."

Well, God commanded him to cast his rod, and the rod became a serpent, and Moses did flee from it. But when, at God's command, he turned from fleeing and seized hold of the serpent, it was no longer a serpent, but his own rod again.

This was as much as to say: If only you

do what I tell you, no harm will come to you; you will overcome all difficulties, and be a true shepherd and deliverer to Israel.

Now the lessons are the same.

First, a lesson about ourselves, and second, a lesson about God. First, we are weak and simple, therefore it is good for us to be humble; and second, God is great and holy and merciful. It is good for us to trust God, and believe that nothing is impossible with Him.

#### SIXTH LESSON

*Exodus* iv. 14-17 and 27-31

You will remember how I tried to explain why God was angry with Moses.

God came to him on the lone hillside and said: "Go to the children of Israel and take a message to them from Me."

And instead of at once saying "Lord, I will go," Moses said, "They will not believe me, and I am no speaker."



Moses was thinking too much about himself and of his weakness, and he was not thinking enough about God—his strength.

But God's anger is only for a moment with His children.

"In a little wrath I hid My face from thee *for a moment*,

"But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

It was only for a moment God was angry with Moses. And now God was about to make His son Moses taste this everlasting kindness.

First He said: "Aaron, thy brother, will speak for thee."

Now that was kindness to give him a companion in this great work, one that the people knew, and his own brother. "Aaron is coming, and when he sees thee he will be glad." He will tell you that you are remembered and loved still.

Then God said: "And I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do."

Moses was called to do a great work, but he was not called to do it alone. There was Aaron, his brother, but above both Moses and Aaron there was God.

But when the day was ended, and Moses was thinking over all that had taken place, I daresay he had many strange thoughts. Perhaps he said: Oh, if all this was only a dream!

Well, one day—it may have been the night of that very day—a stranger came into that place, and wanted to see Moses. And this was Aaron, his brother.

God had said: "He cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart."

When Aaron did come, Moses knew that God had been speaking to him. His faith was made stronger. That was another way in which God made him to taste His everlasting kindness.

I think I see those two old men meeting. They are both grey-haired. Moses is eighty; Aaron is older still. It is forty years since

they met. They kissed each other; they had much to tell. Aaron told all about the people; Moses told all that God had said to him. What joy! what stir of soul—the feeling that God was leading them! All this made another taste of the everlasting kindness.

But one thing more was needed to make Moses taste the everlasting kindness perfectly.

“Would the people believe that God had sent him?”

That was all to be tried.

The two brothers went to Egypt and gathered the princes and elders of Israel together.

And when the people heard they *believed*. They said, “*God* has visited us,” and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

#### SEVENTH LESSON

*Exodus* vii. 14-25

You must remember that the story in this Book of Exodus is the story of how God brought out His people from the bondage in Egypt.

We shall see that He had to do great wonders before He could bring them out.

For many things stood in the way. But the thing which stood first in the way was the hard heart of Pharaoh.

And God's first great work was to break this hard heart, so that the children of Israel might come out in quietness and joy.

One way He took was to make Moses and Aaron to tell him Who sent them. But Pharaoh did not know God.

Another way was to show Pharaoh what wonders His messengers, Moses and Aaron, could work.

They thought: "When Pharaoh sees the rod turned into a serpent, and the serpent of Aaron swallow up all the other serpents, he will surely say, These men have been sent by the great God who made all things."

But Pharaoh only made a mock of this wonder, and said his own wise men could do as much. And then, when no other way would do, God took the way of sending plagues.



A plague is like a sickness.

It is something very hard to bear, sent by God, to make people think of God, to break hard hearts and make them soft, so that God can write His law upon them. And that was truly what God sent those plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt for: to break the hard, proud, bad heart of the king and make it soft, so that He could write His law upon it.

I will tell you about only one of these—the first one. It is called the plague of blood. But in order to know it quite well, I must tell you about the river of Egypt.

In Egypt there is a great river called the Nile.

It is one of the longest and most wonderful rivers in the whole earth. And it does for Egypt what rain does for our country. Once a year it gets deeper and deeper, then it rises to the top of the banks, then it covers the land. And when the land has been all covered with the water, and made soft, then the farmers put in their seed.

That is the meaning of the word: "Cast thy bread upon the waters."

And, besides, that river is full of fish.

The Nile is therefore the life of Egypt. It is rain and springtime, and seedtime and harvest. If the Nile were not to rise and flow over the land, the people would have no corn in harvest.

And long ago the Egyptians, seeing all this, used to say, "The Nile is as good as God to us." And then they said: "The Nile must be a god." And they made an idol of the river. And they worshipped the Nile.

Well, the first plague with which God tried to break the hard heart of Pharaoh was to turn this river, their life, their springtime, their corn-grower, their god—to turn this river into blood.

What an awful sight it must have been, instead of the sparkling living water, to have a great flood of blood!

Women come down to the river to draw water and to bathe. Fishermen spread their

nets, and go out in little boats to catch the fish. The cattle are driven down to graze on the green banks.

But when the plague fell, it was a great red horror they saw, great waves of red blood flowing and flowing. The fish died, and the people could not get water to drink; only blood.

And that lasted for seven days. They ran to the pits, the cisterns, the pools, the ponds; all were turned into blood.

What was this?

It was to show that God, who created the water and made it for the life of man, could turn it into death.

The fish died.

And the people too would have died if it had lasted longer.

This was the first plague.

Sometimes God sends a sickness to you, to make your hearts soft, in order that He may teach you to know His love. And sometimes it is like this He turns life into death or bereavement.

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

**I**T is interesting to know that a *Band of Hope* existed six hundred years before the Christian era.

You will find an account of it in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel.

There were only four members in that band: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, better known by the names given them by their captors—as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

### FIRST LESSON

*Daniel* ii. 1-25

LONG ago—before the Bible was written—God made use of dreams to bring things to pass, but now that we have the Bible He does not.

A dream is a very wonderful thing. In a



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dream the body is asleep and at rest; but the soul is filled with people, with mountains and fields and houses and rivers and trees, with voices, with sounds.

Sometimes, not often, God spoke to His people by dreams. He spoke to Solomon in a dream; He spoke to Paul in dreams.

More frequently He sent a dream to some one not belonging to His people, that it might bring forward one of His people to explain it.

Pharaoh in Egypt dreamed a dream about ears of corn, some full, some thin; about cattle, some well fed, some starved; and God sent that dream to Pharaoh. It was to bring innocent Joseph, who himself was a great dreamer, out of the prison into which he had been wickedly cast, and lift him into the place of chief ruler in the land.

In the same way this king of Babylon dreamed a dream, and then forgot the dream he had dreamed. The dream he dreamed and the forgetting of the dream were both from God, in order that Daniel should be

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 41

lifted up into a place in Babylon like that which Joseph filled in Egypt.

But although Nebuchadnezzar was great, being a king, he was both unreasonable and cruel.

In that old time, when dreams were thought to come from God, learned men sprang up who gave themselves out as tellers of dreams. They were called magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. They were interpreters of dreams. And this unreasonable king said to these learned men: "Tell me my dream."

Now these wise men undertook to tell the meaning of dreams, but not the dreams themselves. They could not do that.

"Put them all to death," cried the cruel king in his rage. Put perhaps a thousand innocent men to death because he had forgotten his dream! How very cruel!

And when the king gave the order there were plenty of that class whose feet are swift to shed blood to fulfil it.

And among the number condemned they

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thought to put Daniel and his three companions to death, although they were neither magicians, nor astrologers, nor sorcerers, nor Chaldeans, but only harmless captives.

But it is not so easy to put to death those whom God intends to live.

So Daniel, being very brave, went straight to the angry king, and said: "O king, do not fulfil this evil threat against innocent men; but give me time, and by my God's help I will undertake to tell your dream and the interpretation of it."

And to this the king agreed.

Then this little Band of Hope met, and Daniel said: "Let us form ourselves into a band of prayer. Only God can help us in this great difficulty."

And they lifted up their cry to God in prayer.

### SECOND LESSON

Read *Daniel* ii. 20-23

ALTHOUGH there were only four in this meeting, yet this great deliverance was

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 43

wrought by their prayer, and that is our lesson in this chapter.

And God heard the prayer of these four young men, who were very dear to Him, and He made known to Daniel both the dream and the interpretation.

And so Daniel saved the lives of the magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans.

### THIRD LESSON

Read *Daniel* iii. 1-18

BUT now this is worse than the dream. An image of gold in a dream was bad enough, even when unknown, but it was only in a dream.

But this image is no dream—it is reality—an unconscious image, sixty feet high, just half the height of most church spires, plated with gold, glorious in the morning sun, splendid in the evening sun.

You will ask, Whose image was it? It was the image of the king himself!

I said he was a foolish fellow, and you see a proof of it here.



#### 44 LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

But it was a serious thing for our band of four. It was against their religion to worship any image, even an image of God—still less a likeness of a man.

And when the day of the worship of the golden image came, the Band of Hope stood still.

Daniel was not present.

Their enemies told the king.

The king, being a foolish fellow, got very angry. He said he had raised these men to their high estate. He had done them so much kindness, and this was the reward!

Then in his anger he called them into his presence. Do not follow a multitude to do evil.

Their noble answer—"Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver, but we dare not fall down to worship graven images. God will help us: God will deliver us."

But next: "Whether or no, we will not worship the image. That would be sin, and we will not be guilty of this sin."

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 45

That really is the lesson.

But a word in the first Epistle of John explains this: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

What idols does the Apostle refer to? All idols, images of gold, and everything else that is not God.

### FOURTH LESSON

Read *Daniel* iii. 19-30

How the three Hebrew youths refused to become idolaters.

They cast themselves on God.

They said: "If God will deliver us, well; if not, that also is well."

Their duty was clear.

But Nebuchadnezzar was both a foolish and evil king. He could not bear that any one should disobey him. You know that in after-years he was changed into a beast. And the beast was already in his heart. His visage changed, and because those three had refused to do wrong at his bidding, they

## 46 LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

were ordered then by him to be cast into a raging fiery furnace.

What do you think these three lads felt? Were they sorry? Yes; life was as sweet to them as it is to you. But sweeter far was righteousness and obedience to God.

But they were cast in—they were hurled into the furnace.

But how strange! The king himself is looking on, the wild beast in him, but the angel in them.

He sees a sight that fills him with terror; he sees a fourth. He asks, Who is that? It is the angel of God.

God was with them. The Eternal God was their refuge.

Then the king ordered them to be taken out.

"And he made a law that people were to speak no evil of the God whom those three young men worshipped."

So it became the fashion to speak well of the three and of their God.

And they were set up in their old places of honour and power again.

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 47

The lesson is—*Do the right: be faithful unto death*, and God will give you a crown of life.

### FIFTH LESSON

*Daniel* iv. 1-18

I AM afraid you will not get much in the way of a lesson, only of a Bible story, to-day.

You must think of a good many years having passed since the dream of the golden image.

During those years Nebuchadnezzar has been in many a battle-field with his soldiers, and he has won many battles. And he has heaped up gold and silver. And he has built up a great palace in Babylon; and, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon anew.

He is very proud of what he has done.

I said he was a foolish king. But he was very clever, for all that. People can be clever and foolish both, especially if they are in high positions in life, like Nebuchadnezzar, and can always have their own way.



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How his heart swelled with pride! He had got into a habit of looking very high up at the castle and palaces and walls, and also round about far and near.

And sometimes when he was being wheeled around the walls, and saw the soldiers in the barracks, the merchants in the market, the sailors on the ships on the river, and the splendid castles, he would say: "Was there ever so clever a king as I am? or one so great?"

Well, but he had another dream, and he dreamed it was summer, and he thought he saw a tree—a splendid fruit tree.

Now that is a very fine thing to dream of.

He saw the tall stem, and the branches, and the flowers, and the fruit.

He heard the birds sing in the branches, and he saw the lambs beneath its shade; and he saw too the little children gathering up the fruit.

Then he saw a watcher—a Holy One come down from heaven, and heard Him cry aloud: "Hew down the tree: cut off

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 49

his branches; shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit." That was an overturning!

"Hew it down, cut it to the stump; let it remain that way for seven years.

"Let the tree be wet with the dew for seven years, but without leaves; no flower and no fruit."

That was the dream which Daniel was called upon to interpret.

But what the awful interpretation of the dream was we can tell when we read the fourth chapter of the Book of Daniel, nineteenth verse to the end.

When he heard Daniel's interpretation, what must Nebuchadnezzar have felt?

To be told that the tree was himself; the cutting down was of himself! And the stump of the roots left in the earth, that too was himself.

Nebuchadnezzar, a king, was a bad king. He had not ruled by the love of God.

God bore with him long, but would now chastise him.

As he had ruled from a beast's heart, He

## 50 LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

would now send him to taste what a beast's life was.

There was but one way to escape to leave off being a beast.

Well, the way Nebuchadnezzar became a beast was with *pride*, personal pride.

"This is great Babylon," he said, "which I have built."

No more thought of God than if he had been a beast.

But there are other ways of being a beast besides the way of Nebuchadnezzar. Strong drink makes beasts of men and women.

And God sends drunkards out to live beasts' lives. And there is only one way out from it: that is, to leave off being beasts.

### A DEVIL'S ELIXIR.

THERE grows no wine  
By the haunted Rhine,  
By the Danube or Guadalquivir,  
Nor on island or cape,  
That bears such a grape  
As grows by the beautiful river.

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL 51

Drugged is their juice,  
For foreign use,  
When shipped o'er the reeling Atlantic,  
To rack our brains  
With the fever pains  
That have driven the Old World frantic.

To the sewers and sinks  
With all such drinks !  
And after them tumble the mixer  
For a poison malign  
Is such Borgia wine,  
Or at best but a devil's elixir.

*Longfellow.*

### SIXTH LESSON

Read *Daniel* vi.

THIS is our last lesson in this book, for the rest is prophecy much too difficult for children to understand.

Now you all know the story of Daniel in the den of lions; but something connected with it you perhaps do not know.

It is a story of the conflict of two religions — the heathen religion, which is man's, and the true religion, which is God's.

The heathen religion is the attempt to lift man up and make him as God.



## 52 LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Babel builders made their attempt.  
Then the Roman emperors made theirs.  
So here they lift Darius up, as if he  
were God.

God's religion is, that God comes down  
and changes man into His own likeness.

Daniel believed that God had come down  
to Sinai and to Judea, and manifested His  
power also to captives by the rivers of  
Babylon.

But now we know about Christ. God  
comes down to the earth, and by His Holy  
Spirit changes man into His own image.

The heathen religion was cruel.

But the true religion is tender and loving.  
Christ came to die for others.

He could die, but He could not be untrue.  
He could not put dishonour on God.

Then there is the presence of God. He is  
always present.

He was in the den of lions. It was He  
who shut their mouths, to show that—

Righteousness triumphs.

*POWER GIVEN TO CHILDREN TO  
SERVE CHRIST*

**B**Y little things great deeds can be done. It was the children who cried Hosanna. That was a little thing in itself. But it was Hosanna to Jesus, and great because He is great, and as long as the world lasts it will be told.

To show what even one voice could do, I will tell you of a German musician who, many years ago, left his native land for America.

Arrived in New York, he could not speak English, but he had a great hunger for music, and one Lord's Day, passing a place of worship, he went in—to enjoy the praise.

Now this was a church where very little attention was given to music; every one sang

in his own way, and the singing was to his ear so unskilful and even rude that it nearly drove him out of the place; but just then his quick ear, in the midst of all the harsh discordant sounds, heard a young female voice, sweet and clear, but not loud, singing in perfect tune, and gradually, one after another, all the congregation caught the tune from her, and followed till the discord ceased, and the whole congregation were singing in perfect harmony.

Another instance of power given to children to serve Christ is told of a very rich Count of Silesia. It is said that somehow he hated Christ and hated the Bible and hated the Church. It is said, indeed, that he made a mock of God and heaven and eternity. Now this rich and evil man had churches on his estate, and, strange to say, he had to appoint the ministers to those churches. And at the time I am telling of he had to appoint one to a church near his own castle. And so bad and unfaithful a man was he, that he appointed a man who also hated God

and the Bible, and made a mock of heaven and eternity.

And the two men would sit at the Count's table scoffing at all holy things. And at the church there was no one to teach the people about Christ.

Now on the Count's estate at that time lived a pious Christian schoolmaster. And when everything in the place was against Christ, he and his household were thinking more of Him and clinging closer to Him. In the evenings passers-by heard hymns of Jesus sung in his house, sweetly sung, in which his children joined.

One evening, as the Count was passing this house, he heard a child singing in the garden. She was alone, and her voice was so sweet that the Count stopped to listen. As he listened he found it was a hymn to Christ the child was singing. Then the singing stopped, and the Count, looking over the hedge, saw that, though she was smiling, she was in tears. Then he asked why she was crying, and she said, "I am crying *for joy*."



"Joy! for what?" said the Count.

"For Christ's love," she quickly replied.

The Count said, "But Christ is dead."

"No," said the little girl, "He is not dead. He died, but He rose from the dead, and He is alive again, and lives for evermore, to send blessings and to save."

The child seemed so sure, so bright, and so glad, that her words fixed themselves in the Count's mind. Silent and thoughtful, he went on his way.

A week after, business called him to take a journey to the borders of Austria, to a village *gnaden-frey*, where was a Moravian settlement. The chapel bells were ringing, and, inquiring why, he was told it was the *children's festival*. For the sake of hearing the children's singing he turned into the chapel. The preacher gave out for the text, "Have ye never heard, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" Remembering the little voice he had heard in his own village, the hard heart of the Count was touched. His wicked pride

was brought low, and, as he told afterwards, he found himself shedding tears.

The children had called on him to follow Christ, and the children had won him to obey. He could no longer scoff; he could no longer withhold his heart from his Lord. The words of Paul came to his lips. In sorrow, in sincerity, and joy, he cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He found himself at the feet of Christ. And now the Count of Silesia joins with the schoolmaster's family in his village, is a loyal soldier in Christ's army, and marches under His banner. It was a child that began the first change, and Jesus was glad. And it is true now, and here, and everywhere, and always, that a little child can lead a man to Jesus. The greatest things are often done by little means.

"One gentle word that I may speak,  
Or one kind, loving deed  
By me, a child both small and weak,  
May prove a tiny seed;  
And who can tell what good may spring  
From such a very little thing?"



Perhaps it would fix this lesson better in your minds if I told you a story about a Norwegian fisher-girl, who once in her life did *not* do all she could. She lived in a cottage by the sea, and she had no mother.

Her father one day going out to fish, said to her, "When night comes on, light the lamp and put it in the window as mother did, and when the darkness falls I'll see where to land."

The little girl—she was very little and all alone—fell fast asleep as night came on, and so the lamp was not lit, and that night her father, not seeing any light, came ashore at the wrong place and was drowned. But the poor child could never forgive herself, and she said, "All my life long I will keep the lamp burning for others." And she lived in that cottage till she was an old woman. She sat up spinning all night and slept by day.

Many a sailor's life she saved.

By failing once she learned for evermore to do what she could.

## *THE NEW HEART*

**I**N the books I read when I was as young as you are was the story which I used to think very wonderful.

A certain king had an only son, and he was the heir to the throne. But this son had a great infirmity. Whenever he opened his mouth to speak, frogs and serpents sprang out. The king wept many tears, so did the queen. But the evil did not cease. Doctors were called in, but they could do nothing. Nobody was wise and skilful enough to cure the child; and people avoided him; they did not like to be in the same room with him.

Night and day the king cried in secret, "Oh, that my poor boy might be cured!" Night and day the queen joined in the prayer, "Oh, that the evil might come to an end!"

But it did not come to an end, and the longer it continued the worse it seemed to grow.

One day a traveller was passing through the kingdom, and as he came near the royal palace he heard the porters and people about talking of the boy and the sorrow of the king and the queen. So he said to himself, "Should I pass by this sorrow?" So he went into the palace and sent word to the king that he knew how the boy could be cured.

"What the boy wants," said the traveller, "is that a new heart should be given to him, and his present heart taken away. It is in the heart that the evil is," and this was told to the king.

And the king said, "The half of my kingdom will I give to you if you bring this cure to pass."

But the stranger said, "I shall not receive either silver or gold, either house or fields; but I want that your son shall come with me." So the king and queen allowed their son to go with the traveller.

Now down in a beautiful valley lived a wise and a noble woman who was known for her wonderful cures. She had made the blind to see and the deaf to hear. The traveller placed the boy under her care, and by the wonderful skill she had the old heart was put away and the new heart was brought into its place. And then he was sent back to his father. When he came into his father's presence, he said, "What a beautiful dream I have had!" and as he spoke, instead of frogs and newts and serpents, there came out of his mouth the most lovely rubies and pearls. Everybody was delighted; everybody wished to be beside him. And the king made a great banquet in honour of his son's return, and bade all his friends to it.

And by-and-by the old king died and his son ascended the throne, and in the history of that kingdom the chapter which tells of this reign is called the history of "The King with the Ruby Mouth."

Now I have not told the story just as I read it. I have let you a little bit into the



secret of its meaning. The mouth out of which serpents came was the mouth of a child that had a heart unkind. The mouth out of which rubies came was the mouth of the same child after the evil heart was taken away and a kind heart put in its place. The serpents were unkind words and un-beautiful words; rude thoughts and harsh thoughts, spoken to servants and to parents. The pearls and rubies were the loving, honest, brave words from the new, loving, honest, and brave heart. And the wise lady in the beautiful valley was the Church of Jesus, where by prayer, by penitence and by faith in Jesus the new heart was given.

You are sons and daughters of the King of Heaven. Speak good words, words honest and true, words of lovingkindness to all around you. God will fulfil His word, "A new heart will I give unto you," to all who ask Him, and who use it as it comes to them to make others happy.

## *GOD'S CARE FOR THE BIRDS*

SEPTEMBER

TO-DAY I have been out among the green lanes, and there I saw some wonderful proofs of God's care of birds. You will think it strange, yet it is true, there are people who do not think God has care for His creatures. But I think everything about us speaks of His care, not for man alone, but for the animal world.

The hedges are covered with red berries and black; the bright red clusters of the mountain-ash, the elderberries, the great red pods of the dog-rose, the small dark-red berries of the hawthorn, and the blackberries, they are plentiful on every thicket



and wild-growing hedge. Now, I have been noticing one thing in these fruits. First, there are hardy ones, like the berries of the mountain-ash and the hawthorn, which will remain ripe on the trees for many weeks. But there are others which are not hardy, like blackberries, which must be gathered when they are ripe. These do not all ripen at once, but gradually, twig by twig, branch by branch, as the sun reaches into them; so that they will go on ripening and giving newly-ripened berries for weeks to come. Now it appears to me as if our Lord must have been thinking of something like this when He spoke of how God cared for birds. These hedges are God's table for the birds for bleak winter months. From April till June He feeds some of them with caterpillars and grubs, and others with other things; from June till August they have seeds of a thousand kinds, and because they are in one sense our fellow-creatures, and also our fellow-workers in our orchards and harvest-fields, we give them a share of our

corn and barley and fruit. But, when these are all cleared away, God spreads a new table for them, covers the hedgerows with clusters of beautiful berries, which hang through the winter. Such is provision for some birds. For other kinds of birds He has other winter stores. These other birds I have often seen in a certain week in late autumn gathering in flocks and settling on the roof of a church, and when the entire flock was gathered the whole multitude of it spread their wings, rose up and up, higher and higher, flew away and away into a warmer land, where God had taught them to go; where He had prepared stores of new grubs, new seeds, new berries, for them. And so they went year by year. Such is God's care for the birds.

Now, God has more care of you; He has furnished a far better feast for you; to you Jesus has been given to be your Bread of Life. "Are you not much better than they?"

It is beautiful to think how God cares for

the sparrows. It is still more beautiful to think how much more He cares for you.

Sometimes in Italy the people meet to have a great holiday. They call that holiday the "Carnival." The streets are filled with people. In the windows of the houses people sit with baskets of flowers and sweets, which they throw at the people in the streets. From all the villages round about at one of these carnivals the people went into the city; but one peasant-boy preferred to be at home—a bright-eyed boy. He remained at home to play with his pet sparrow. And when everybody else was gone away, he took out the cage of his pet, opened the door, took the sparrow on the forefinger of his one hand and fed it with the other. They had a happy time together. Brightly shone the little bird's eye; loudly it chirped its song of thanks to its dear friend and master. The boy told his love to the bird; the bird trilled back its love to the boy. But something was going wrong; the air grew black, and then arose near and far

an awful sound. The earth began to heave, the houses to fall—the houses of the rich and the houses of the poor—and the cattle were filled with terror. It was an earthquake.

The boy, thinking of his sparrow, fastened it up in its cage and hung the cage on its peg. But the earth heaved under the poor boy's house, and the house was shaken to pieces, and walls and roofs fell down. And the boy was caught in the falling ruins and buried (his brother also; his brother flung his arms about his neck, and thus they died, and in the ruins they were buried), and all that was visible of the boy that had been so happy with his little bird in the morning was his hand. His hand rose up out of the ruins. And then came other shocks of the earthquake, and one of these unlatched the door of the cage, and the little bird flew out. Where did it fly to? To the hand of its dear young master—to the hand on which it had perched in the morning.

68      GOD'S CARE FOR THE BIRDS

The living bird, the dead boy, the ruined cottage, the heaving earth; but God, our God, is over all, good and strong and blessed for ever.

"I am only a little sparrow,  
A bird of low degree;  
My life is of little value,  
But the Lord doth care for me.

"I have no barn or storehouse,  
I neither sow nor reap;  
God gives me a sparrow's portion,  
But never a seed to keep.

"If my meal is sometimes scanty,  
Close picking makes it sweet;  
I have always enough to feed me,  
And life is more than meat.

"I know there are many sparrows;  
All over the world we're found:  
But our Heavenly Father knoweth  
When one of us falls to the ground.

"Though small, we are never forgotten;  
Though weak, we are never afraid;  
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth  
The life of the creatures He made."

And God had some good reason for let-

ting the sparrow's little master be buried in the ruins.

He was taking him from evil to come. He was taking him where he would be for ever safe from sin.

It is still a great mystery. But one thing is clear. You see God cares for the sparrow, and the Lord says, "He will much more care for you."



“*DEARLY BELOVED, AVENGE NOT  
YOURSELVES*”

*Romans xii. 19*

I HAVE not required to search for a lesson to you this morning. One has come to me and to all in our neighbourhood from the playground. Two boys playing at marbles. A misunderstanding arose; then a quarrel, a blow; and then in answer to the blow a stone; then death.

The one struck by the stone was killed.

I am sorry for the boy who was killed, but I am very much more sorry for the boy who threw the stone. I am sure he did not mean to kill his companion. That never entered into his thoughts. Only he was angry at being struck; he was mad angry,

and lifted the stone and threw it, and death stepped on to the playground.

It is all so pitiful.

Boys at play; angry words; blows; stones; then death; then the awful, awful thought of the survivor, "I have killed my playmate"; then the inquest, then the police-court, and, above all, the agony in two homes.

Now what is the lesson? It is the one I have read to you:—

"Do not avenge yourselves."

It is terribly hard to keep down the hand when you have been struck; when you are smarting from some hard blow, and put to shame, and some companions near are laughing, it is one of the hardest things you can do to keep from hitting back.

There are some people who will say: "If you don't hit back, you are a *coward*, you are afraid." And I have seen many a blow given because that was said.

Now I say: "Don't hit back. Don't avenge yourself."

Through and through it is the best way.

An old elder, a dear friend of mine, was wont to say: "Better be sinned against than be the sinner. Better endure evil done to you than do evil yourself."

Our Lord said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

I know there are some questions put, such as, "If robbers should come?" But we are not talking of robbers in this lesson.

Or if the striker should be striking some child, some girl, or some weak old person? We are not considering that either.

There are different cases. You may strike down robbers when you can, and you sometimes might have to strike brutal people when they are striking others. Even then, it is often best to get the magistrate to strike. Better if Moses had not killed the Egyptian. But when you are struck your-

self, don't hit back. Never mind what people standing by say about cowardice. It is not cowardice to refuse to do evil or folly. If this boy had not struck back, how much happier he would have been to-day! How much braver it would have been to bear! It is nobler to yield, even when you are in the right.

We all know a good deal about Mr. Wesley, but we do not all know that the virtue of patience was one of his greatest excellences.

It is well known that Joseph Bradford was for some years the travelling companion of Mr. Wesley, for whom he would have sacrificed health, and even life, but to whom his *will* would never bend except in meekness. "Joseph," said Mr. Wesley one day, "take these letters to the post." "I will take them after preaching, sir," said Joseph. "Take them now, Joseph." "I wish to hear you preach, sir, and there will be sufficient time for the post after service." Mr. Wesley said: "I insist upon

your going now, Joseph." Joseph: "I will not go at present, sir." "You won't?" "No, sir." "Then you and I must part." "Very good, sir." The good men slept over it. Both were early risers. At four o'clock the next morning the refractory helper was accosted with: "Joseph, have you considered what I said, that we must part?" "Yes, sir." "And we must part?" "Please yourself, sir." "Will you ask my pardon, Joseph?" "No, sir." "You won't?" "No, sir." "Then I will ask yours, Joseph." Poor Joseph was instantly melted; smitten as by the rod of Moses; and forth gushed the tears, like the water from the rock.

You have many books now, and some of the new books are very good. But there is an old hymn-book which, being the first of its kind in this country, is really good; but now it is being fast forgotten. It is a book from which the beautiful lesson comes: "How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour!" I will recite two or three

verses from one of Dr. Watts's "Dawn Songs":—

"Birds in their little nests agree,  
And 'tis a shameful sight  
When children of one family  
Fall out and chide and fight.

"Hard names at first and threatening words  
That are but noisy breath,  
May grow to clubs and naked swords,  
To murder and to death.

"Pardon, O Lord, our childish rage,  
Our little brawls remove,  
That as we grow to riper age  
Our hearts may all be love."



“*WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE  
HEALED*”

*Isaiah liii. 5*

THE wonderful thing about this chapter is that it tells the story of Christ's life and death as if the person telling it had been living when Christ lived. And yet it was written 700 years before Jesus was born.

Seven hundred years before the Saviour came God told Isaiah of His coming, and told him all He was to suffer.

Then Matthew and others wrote it down after He came.

There are many things in this chapter which you might try this evening to find out.

There is the name of Christ; there is a portrait of Christ; there is an account of the birth of Christ; there is a description of

the way people spoke about Christ; and there is the death of Christ, and His burial, and His future glory.

But it is only one thing of all the things in the chapter I am going to try to make plain to you.

It is said here that *Jesus died for us*. It is also said that it is *by His dying for us that you and I are to be made good*.

"With His stripes we are healed."

Now I think almost every child understands this much: that *Jesus did not deserve to die*. If it had not been for our sakes, He need not have died. He died to save us from death and from being condemned for our sins by God at the judgment day.

For this purpose God laid *on Him* the iniquity of us all.

But what you do not know so well is that it is *by His dying for us that we are to be made good*.

"With His stripes we are healed."

Now try to listen. It is a hard thing to understand, but it is an easy thing *to feel*.

And what I am going to relate may help to make this plain to you.

In a particular district of France there is a school for poor boys who have neither father nor mother to care for them, and who run homeless about the streets.

It is a very good school, and the boys who enter it are cared for and helped to become good men.

But sometimes bad boys get in, and boys who will not try to be better. A boy of this sort one day stabbed another in the arm with a knife.

Now in that school they have two very wonderful rules: 1st. Bad boys, when they do mischief, are tried by the scholars, not by the masters. And the sentence the other boys passed on this cruel lad was that he should be kept three weeks in a dark cell and fed on bread and water.

2nd. But in this school substitutes are allowed in punishments. Any boy may come forward and say, I will bear the punishment to which an evil-doer has been sentenced.

And when the sentence was pronounced, the question was asked whether any boy was willing to bear this punishment.

And to the surprise of all the school the boy whose arm had been stabbed stepped forward and said, "I will bear it in his stead."

And that was agreed to, but the master said, "The criminal must take the bread and water to the cell."

And the boy whose arm had been stabbed went into the cell to bear the punishment.

And the boy who stabbed him carried the bread and water three times a day to the cell.

He went through his task six days. But then he broke down; three times every day to see the pale face of the boy he had stabbed in prison for him made him see how cruel he had been, and he came to the master and insisted on bearing the rest of the punishment himself.

So Christ's sufferings show us that it was the sin of the world which made Jesus willing to die.

"And He died for us."



*"THEY KILLED THE PRINCE OF  
LIFE"*

*Acts iii. 15*

**B**EFORE some of the young people here were born there was a great war, called the Crimean War, on the continent of Europe.

Now in a great war like that it is sometimes the case that if there should be a city or a fort near where the fighting is, the gates of it are shut and the walls made strong, and those who are inside fight to keep their enemies out, and those who are outside fight to get in.

In the Crimean War there was a city called Sebastopol, and one day the fighters inside of the city fired a great cannon-ball against the fighters outside. But this shot struck on the side of a hill and buried itself

deep in the earth, and it so happened that at that very spot there was a spring of water, which had never been able to get out. But the opening caused by this cannon-ball made a way for it, and the spring gushed out, and the water was a great blessing to the poor soldiers who were stationed on that hill-side. So out of this evil thing came this that was good.

Now this is the very thing which the present passage shows.

The enemies of Christ put Him to death.

They really meant to do this and this only, to put Him to death. And they did put Him to death. "By wicked hands they killed the Prince of Life." But out of this evil deed God caused to flow forth the greatest blessing which ever came into the world.

From Jesus on the Cross comes first our knowledge of God, comes next our knowledge of Himself, then comes the pardon of our sins.

I saw in a village I went to visit some



## 82 THEY KILLED THE PRINCE OF LIFE

time back an ancient stone cross, and at the foot of the cross there gushed out three springs of the purest, coolest water, which never dried up in summer and never froze up in winter.

That is just like the Cross of Christ. He was put to death; that was man's evil deed. But ever since then there have been flowing out into the world three springs of life, viz., faith, hope, and charity.

*"IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"*

*Luke xxii. 19*

IN England there are many kind people who gather poor children who have no home, no father or mother, from the streets, and who take them to Canada to homes, and work, and prosperity.

A company of such children had arrived in America, and were just preparing to go into a train to be taken to the far West of Canada, where homes and good prospects were awaiting them.

They were all proud and glad—proud, for they had been decked out in new clothing, and glad because of the grand journey they had before them. But one boy was seen to be away from the rest busy working at the lining of his old jacket. He was cutting at it with a knife.

"What are you doing?" the leader of the party asked.

"I am cutting out this lining, sir, to take it with me."

"And why do you wish to take that old rag with you?"

"Old rag, sir?" exclaimed the boy, and then he added, very solemnly, "It was part of a dress my mother wore. She cut up her old dress to line my jacket with. This," he said, taking the material into his hand, "was my dead mother's."

A little bit of an old gown! That was all. Worth nothing in money. But to this poor orphan and exile it was a reminder of a mother's love. The leader of the party understood, and he honoured the boy, so the little rag was carefully folded up and placed in the boy's bosom under his new waistcoat to remember his mother by.

Now that boy's feeling was very tender and very beautiful. It was a great joy to the poor mother when she was cutting up her old dress to think that it would help to

keep her boy warm. How much more deep and solemn must have been that joy if she could have foreseen that it was to go with him over the sea to the New World to keep his heart warm, to be worn in his bosom in his new life in Canada, when she was no more, and in kindly remembrance of her.

We like to be remembered. A little flower there is whose name speaks the language of all human hearts, "Forget me not." However different men, women and boys may be, they all like to be remembered. And in that longing all of us may understand Jesus. He too longed to be remembered. When He was going away from earth, He said to His disciples, "I should like to be remembered by you, and all who live after you." And He appointed a little meal, a supper, as it is called, the Lord's Supper, the eating of bread and drinking of wine, to be remembered by. "This will keep Me in remembrance," He said. "As often as you do this, remember Me."

And what reason have we all to remember

Him? He left heaven for us. He lived for us His life of toil and love and sorrow. He died for us and for our sins. He rose again and went away to heaven to live, and pray, and labour for us.

That boy's mother loved her son; far more did Jesus love us. That boy would not forget his mother and her love; far more should we resolve that we will not forget Jesus. It was a little work in which he saw his mother's love; how great is the work in which we see Jesus' love!

It was right and noble of that boy to keep that dear heart in remembrance, and what is right and noble is always the joyful, the strengthening and blessed thing to do; how much more right, more noble, is it to keep the heart of Jesus in remembrance, and how much more does doing so give joy, and strength, and blessedness!

It was not for His sake alone, but for our sakes, that Jesus said, "Remember Me."

It is hundreds of years now since Jesus gave out this wish of His, but by thousands

He has been kept in memory ever since. In sorrow and joy the memory of Him has been strength and gladness at home and abroad. His memory is the life and light of loving hearts.

Like the poor boy putting the bit of his mother's dress into his bosom to remember his mother by, so do Christians keep the feast Jesus ordered, and carry it in their hearts.

"Do this in remembrance of Me!" It is the memory of Heaven's goodwill.



## ALPHA AND OMEGA

*Revelation i. 8*

WHAT is God like?

Who would have thought if it had not been told us that He was like the letters in the alphabet?—I am A and Z.

There is a little Chinese toy, which consists of five pieces of wood, shaped so as to fit each other in a variety of ways. And out of those five little bits of wood you can form two or three thousand different shapes; arrange the pieces differently, and you have a different shape.

But although that is a very wonderful toy, it is not to be compared to the alphabet. You can arrange the few letters of the alphabet in thousands upon thousands of different words. And no new word could arise for

which, if we use the whole alphabet, we could not find a shape or word to express it.

All that we speak, then, all that we write, all that ever has been written, all that ever will be written, you will find enclosed in the twenty-six letters of the alphabet.

Now that is why this is the name of God. God says, "I am like the alphabet; I am its first letter, I am its last letter, and I am all the letters between."

As all language in all the world in the A, B, C, so all life, all power, and all goodness are to be found in God.

But here we have only this first and last letter.

He is the beginning and end of your life. He is the Maker of it. It is made for His glory. He is the beginning and end of all religion in the life. He is the Author and Finisher.

Two thoughts come to us here: Where did my religion come from? It came from God. What did I receive my religion for? To serve God.

Now, another way to understand is this:  
What should be your first thought in the morning? It should be God! What your last thought at night? God!

What should be your first concern in life? To please God. What your last? Have I pleased God?

The happy life is the life that, looking back, sees God in childhood.

And the life that is closing, resting in God, goes home to God.

## THIRSTING AND FINDING

*John vii. 32, 39*

THERE are two things here which every one of us, old and young, must take to heart. Here is the Saviour telling us there is a time coming when certain people shall seek Him and not find Him. And again a little further on He says: If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink; which is the same as if He said: If any one thirsts for Me, that one shall find Me.

It is a strange fact that He was in the world, moving along the streets, living in the houses; He was seen and heard speaking every day; yet there were crowds of people who met Him, who saw Him, who heard Him, but who did not *find* Him.

But side by side with these, there were

others, many others, who both sought Him and found Him.

Now you might think, and sometimes you do think, it would be easier to find Christ if He were in Liverpool or London, as He was in Galilee and Judea, moving along the streets; you might think it would only be needful to go up to Him, to kneel before Him, to say to Him, Lord Jesus, place your hand on my head and bless me.

But you see it really was not easier. There were thousands who saw Him and heard Him and did not find Him.

They did not know that it was the Saviour they heard and saw; they saw only a Man like themselves, and they did not feel any need for a Saviour. It was only when their heart thirsted, when they wanted with all their heart to see Him, that they did see the Saviour in the common-looking Man. Now it is not so much different to-day.

Then a common-looking Man, now a common-looking book; the words look like common words, but they are the words of



the living Saviour. It is He who is speaking them, and although now in a book, they are yet all the same as if they came from His lips fresh this very day.

And many read the words and hear them, and do not find Christ in them. How is that? It is because they do not want to find Him, they do not seek Him with all their heart. But if any one thirsts, *i.e.*, if he wants with all his heart to find Him, he will hear and find Jesus in His words. The hearts that find Him there are those that want to find Him, that are athirst.

But now notice the wonderful offer the Lord makes: If any one wants something good with all the heart, he is to come unto Him and ask, and he shall have it.

If there is some good thing, some great thing, something it would make us better to have, if we come to Jesus greatly wishing it, thirsting for it, we shall have it.

I know a child who wants to be happy. There is not a child I ever knew who did not want to be happy; every child does.



God made you to wish for happiness. Jesus says, "Come unto Me, and you shall find it."

Jesus knows that the first step to happiness is to see that God loves you, and the next is to love God. And Jesus works these two loves into the heart that you may be happy. Some people fancy that religion is to make people sad; but it is not so; it is the beginning of happiness.

I know another child, and the desire of that one's soul is to be clever. Perhaps I am speaking now to some very clever children; you are eager on your lessons, on marks, on examinations, on prizes; you thirst to be great scholars and to know things.

Well, Jesus likes that. He likes that you should be eager for lessons, and by-and-by learned in good things. He giveth understanding unto the *simple*; not to the clever only. And He says, "Come unto Me, and come thirsting, and you shall have learning as well as happiness."

In Psalm cxix. one says, "God has made me wiser than the ancients, and I have more

understanding than all my teachers." Jesus teaches us to know God, and to know God is the best learning.

And I know more than one who wish to be good. And I am sure there are boys and girls here who say in their hearts, "We want to be good."

Even when they are not thinking of this wish, they are in a way wishing it. Something in their hearts says, "We want to be good."

Jesus says here: "Come to Me for all you need. Come seeking it with all your heart, and you shall find it." Take the Saviour as the Friend and Counsellor of your life while you are young. In old age He will not forsake you.

"WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND"

*Isaiah lv. 6*

"SEEK," or come to, "the Lord *while He may be found.*"

"Call upon," or come to, "the Lord *while He is near.*"

What are we to understand by such words?

Is God only *sometimes* to be found by those who seek Him?

Is God only *sometimes* near when we call?

Now I really do not know that I can make this plain to you. But the truth is—there is a time when God is to be found.

And then there is a time when He is not to be found.

There is a time when He is near.

Then—after that—there is a time when He is not near.

At one of the New York Prayer Meetings

a young sailor rose up and said, "Seek the Lord now—now, while He may be found.

"I had a shipmate who was always going to begin to seek the Lord, and always putting it off. He really meant to begin some day. But at Panama he took the marsh fever. 'Oh, Ned,' I said to him on his sick-bed, 'seek the Lord now.' 'Tis too late now,' said Ned, and died."

And continuing, he said,—

"And shall I tell you how I myself was brought to know that there is a time when He will not be found?

"My mother pled with me to give myself to Christ, but I always said, 'Time enough yet, mother.'

"But one Sunday I heard my mother asking a neighbour's daughter to come with her to church. She said, 'I cannot go till next Sunday, when I shall have my new bonnet.'

"And next Sunday she was in her grave."

## *A CHAPTER ON PRAYER*

THE secret why we do not have our prayer answered is when we ask earthly things first.

But our Lord bids us "Seek first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness," and all other things shall be added. If we put God's honour first, God will answer always, at some time, although perhaps not in the very way we expected.

Here is a story which was told one Sunday in an Arran pulpit by one who knew the persons it concerned.

There lived in a quiet village a godly man. And he had a wife and three sons. His wife died, and the burden of bringing up these sons fell on him. He cried to God to help him.

Now, it so happened, that in that house



there was a rush-bottomed chair, the only chair of that sort in the house, and it was at that chair this good man knelt when he prayed for his boys as well as at family prayer.

But often when alone he spent long whiles on his knees praying for their conversion. But he saw no change in his sons; they were hard, selfish and worldly.

At last one by one they all left him, and went into business in some great city of the land. They prospered in business, but not in religion. But business prosperity is not joy, and prosperity was making them hard.

The father still prayed the more earnestly that they might gain their own souls, although they should lose the whole world.

But at the end of his days they were not saved.

There was an old servant who lived in the house, and to her he said when he was dying, "I will pray now that my death may be used by God to save them." Then he died.

The three young men came home to the



funeral. And when all was past, they said: "What shall we do with the house and the old furniture?" One said: "Let them go to the old woman who has taken care of him." But the eldest son said: "Well, I consent if only you will allow me to get the rush-bottomed chair. I never heard prayers like those I heard there. I hear those prayers still when I am at business. I think if I had the chance I would not live the prayerless life I am living now."

And the other two were softened. And with that the Spirit of the Lord came upon the eldest brother, and he said: "Let us kneel around it once more and pray."

And they did. And with great crying and tears they spent that afternoon together. And the end of all was, that the two younger brothers gave up their business and offered themselves to the mission-field. And they are well known as missionaries now. And the eldest brother is one of those whose praise is in all the churches.

Jesus is seeking for you, to find you and

to bless you. He is always better than our prayers.

Once I heard a very interesting proof of God answering prayers from the Rev. Mr. Campbell, of Bangalore. He had been preaching to the soldiers one Sunday evening, and his text was, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. And at the close of the service a young soldier came forward, and after a little conversation asked him whether one who had been *very* bad might be saved. Mr. Campbell told him that it was just sinners that Jesus came to save, the very worst. By-and-by, after meeting together many times, the young soldier became a Christian, and joined the Church.

But what fixed the story of this young man more than any other on the preacher's mind was a word he said: "I have found Christ, and that will be good news to my old mother at home." Well, Mr. Campbell was telling this story once at a missionary meeting, and giving it as a proof that foreign missions often sent back fruit of thanks-

giving to people at home, and he closed by saying: "If any one had been beside that mother when the good news came, oh, what joy!" And there was sitting on the platform that evening a gentleman who rose and said, "I was beside that mother when the good news came home, for I was her minister."

The story was this. She was a Christian mother, and she had this only son—this child of her heart, whom she loved. Well, after much trouble and sorrow, he enlisted, and she saw him no more. But she prayed for his conversion; she kept on praying for him night and day. Many a time she asked the minister to join with her in prayer. She prayed for her son for nine years without once omitting, and one morning early she hurried to the minister's house with an open letter, and in great excitement said, "Our prayers are answered."

The first words of the letter were these: "My dear mother, I send you good news; Jesus has found me, and has folded me to His breast at last!"

## THE "LION SERMON"

1 *Timothy* iv. 16; 1 *Peter* v. 5-11

QUITE lately there was a curious service held in an old church in London.

It was on the 16th of October there was preached in the church of St. Katherine Cree, Leadenhall Street, what was called the "Lion sermon."

It is preached every year on October 16th. It has been preached every year in that same church for the last two hundred and fifty years.

If you wanted to be present and would go a little earlier than the hour, you would hear the most lovely chime of bells—a chime beginning in the ordinary way, only more softly pealing, and then breaking into hymn tunes—"Sun of my soul," "Abide with me," "The happy land," and the like. Then there is the service, made very short;

then the event of the evening—the sermon, the "Lion sermon."

And this is what the people present that Tuesday evening heard.

There was once in the city a very pious man, called Sir John Gayer (or Gair). At one time he was Lord Mayor of London. Sir John happened to be in Asia at one period of his life. And when he, with his caravan, was travelling through a desert place, he found himself face to face and alone with a lion. Everybody of his company who could have helped him had gone forward. Sir John knew that only God could deliver him. He thought of Daniel in the den of lions. He perhaps thought of Paul, who at one time was expecting to meet an emperor who was as cruel as a lion. And he fell on his knees there before the beast and shut his eyes and cried to God to shut the mouth of the lion. And when he had finished his prayer and opened his eyes, the lion was nowhere to be seen. So when he came back to London he set aside a sum of money to



be given away in gifts to poor people every 16th of October, and to secure that a sermon should be preached to tell the generations to come how God heard his prayer and delivered him from the mouth of the lion.

Lions? This was an *actual* lion.

Lions? There are stone monuments of them! In abbeys and cathedrals you may see knights with their feet resting on the lion.

Well, the lion the knights sought to trample was the *evil spirit which goeth about like a roaring lion*.

Perhaps you may never have to face an actual lion. But this other lion you will have to face. Who is to help you to subdue that? Only God.

There is the *lion of sloth*.

There is the *lion of passionate anger*.

There is the *lion of untruthfulness*.

There is the *lion that rends the soul* (Ps. vii.).

There is the *lion that waits secretly for his prey*.

## ON GIVING

2 *Corinthians* viii. 1-12

### I

THERE are some words which to children are a little hard to be understood in these verses.

But what they say is well worth trying to understand.

They say, first, that God gave them a great blessing—a grace.

They say, next, that this blessing was the giving of money to help Christ's Churches which were poorer than their own Church.

They say, third, that before they gave their money to Christ for His poor Churches they had given *themselves*.

And, lastly, they say that in so acting they were just following Christ's own way

of doing; for He gave *Himself* to us, that He might save us, and being rich in heaven, He came down to earth and became poor for our sakes.

Now it is this I want you to think of. It is the *grace* of giving *one's self* to Jesus as Jesus gave Himself for us.

Children as young as you have no money, or not much money, of their own to give to Christ for His poor people or for His work.

But they can give what is better than money: they can give a part of themselves.

What is it in a child that is richer and better than money? It is love.

The smallest child who understands can give that.

God says: "Give Me thy heart." The heart is just love.

Children are not too young to give their hearts to Jesus—to love Jesus.

Jesus likes to have the love of children coming to Him.

That is the gold and silver of heaven.

And because children cannot see the Lord

Jesus Himself, He will have this love given to brothers, to sisters, to father, and mother, and schoolfellows, to friends and neighbours.

He says: "Inasmuch as it is given to them, it is given to Christ."

Now say: "I will give more of myself to my mother, to my sister, my brother, than ever.

"I will not be greedy in expecting things to myself.

"I will be a giver, and what I give will be a bit of myself—my love."

The blessing will be, that giving to those in the house with you will be accounted giving to Christ.

In the northern city where I once spent my holidays, there were many things to see and to hear about. There were fine old churches, the old castle, old monuments on graves, and old traditions. Then there were the golf links, the beautiful sea-shore and the sea. But one of the things which I best like to call back and think about is the story of an old woman who lived there long



ago, but who is still remembered for her kindness to the poor.

I am sorry I cannot tell you her name, nor the year she was born, nor when she died, but only this: the story of her good deeds. When she was living, she looked round about in this ancient town of St. Andrews, and saw that winter was a very hard time for poor old women. She saw that many of them were widows, whose husbands had been drowned at sea, and when they got to be old, and weary, and poor, they were no longer able to work as they used to do, and they felt the winter to be a sadly trying time.

So this excellent woman—she was not what people call a lady; I mean she did not belong to grand people—did not live in a fine house, did not have servants; she was just a homely, ordinary woman, belonging to the common people. Well, this good soul, seeing the old women in her neighbourhood cold and ill-clad in winter, and without much fire, said to herself: "I will save



up whatever I can save, I will spend nothing on myself that I can do without," and in this way she gathered together, by saving and sacrifice, what people about her might call a good bit of money; not thousands, oh no, nor hundreds even; perhaps as much as a hundred and fifty pounds. And she put this money aside, and she gave it first to God, and then in trust to certain magistrates and others in St. Andrews, to be invested as she desired, and the yearly proceeds to be paid out in coal to poor old women in that town; and winter by winter, as the winter comes round, there is the sum of five pounds, the savings of this old lady (you now see she was a very real lady), spent in buying coal—ten carts of coal. That means ten poor old women who will be warm instead of cold, because this old lady had pity for all such in her heart, and denied herself many luxuries, and even comforts, in order to lay up this money for the poor women.

Now think, as long as Scotland lasts there

will be these ten carts of coal for so many poor old women in St. Andrews.

There are names in the almanac of saintly ladies who lived long ago. This lady's name is not in any almanac, but I am sure when the poor widow who gave the two mites is spoken of in the Great Day this old St. Andrews' saint will be counted worthy to stand beside her.

It is said: "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." See how great a lending this is to the Lord; it goes on year by year, even after the giver is dead.

## II

*Hebrews* xiii. 16

THIS is the counsel to-day—"To do good and to communicate."

I will tell you a little story and then give my lesson.

A good many years ago I heard of a young lady who was blind. Her parents were wealthy, and had their blind daughter taught

to do everything that was possible for blind people to do. She was trained to be a good musician, and she had a good voice. It did people good to hear her singing a hymn and accompanying it on the piano; and although hers was a lonely life, yet she resolved to be active and useful. So she searched out all the blind children and blind people in her neighbourhood, and in one way and another tried to do them good.

Now among the blind people in the town where she lived there was a very rough-speaking man, a pauper, who had a fine family of children, all except one little girl, and she was blind, like himself.

Now, it is strange to say, the blind man could not endure his own blind child, and often beat her cruelly if she stumbled, or was the occasion of an accident.

My blind young lady heard of this poor lonely ill-treated child, and she set out one day, crossed the town, went up the narrow street in which the child's family lived, and found the father standing at the door.

"Well," he said, "who are you?"

"I am blind Miss Hill."

"And what do ye want?"

"I want to see your blind daughter."

"And what do ye want with her?"

"I would like to teach her to read and sew."

"What will ye gie me if I let you teach my lassie?"

"Well," she said, "I do not think I should give you anything."

"Then ye'll no get her, and ye'll no see her."

The young lady, however, did not mean to be put off in that way. So she came day by day, and got the same reception, until one day she found the father absent, and went in.

The mother received her gladly. The little child knew nothing about learning, but she thought the lady could protect her, and whispered, "Will ye keep my faither from beating me?" But the father heard of the visit, and stood out, and said unless



he was paid for it he would not allow the child to be taught.

At last Miss Hill agreed to give him sixpence a week, and she has been giving the churlish boor that for more than a year.

It is a sight to see the poor blind child setting out from the poor home, hurrying, groping her way, right shoulder forward, every day, to be in time at the home of her lady teacher, learning to read, to sew, to knit, and resolving, like her teacher, to do good.

### III

#### *Contentment*

1 *Timothy* vi. 6; *Hebrews* xiii. 5

THINKING over the lesson I gave you in the last chapter, that God has other ways of making people rich than by giving them money, I find that He bestows *graces* on His people, old and young, which shine forth, and make glad the circle in which they are seen.



Of these graces one kept coming back to my mind as very good, and as one of the most enriching gifts which a boy or girl could receive.

This good thing is *contentment*.

If boy or girl, man or woman, had all the gold and silver in the world and yet had not contentment, they would not be happy.

But if one who had neither gold nor silver had contentment, he would be happy.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain."

"Be content with such things as ye have," and this story will show you what contentment means.

In a German village one day the village school was coming out. The children rushed out; they began to jump and run. Many made off to the fields; others went into the playground and began to play at ball and other games. At the end of all and last came a little lad who, through an accident when he was very young, was lame, and had to walk with crutches. He saw his school-fellows leaping and running, and he

seemed to be as happy, looking at their happiness, as if he were leaping and running himself.

There happened to be passing that day a stranger from a distant town, a writer of books. His heart was touched by the sight of the poor boy, looking on but unable to join in the play of his schoolmates; and he went near to him.

"Are you sorry that you cannot play like the others?" said the stranger.

"No, sir; I am quite happy too. I have a starling at home that can speak, and I have a linnet that sings. Mother is very kind to me; and I have books."

"But when you are grown up and a man, what will you do to earn your bread?"

"Well, I shall be a cobbler. I shall be able to sit and work. I shall have a room to work in, and I shall keep birds in the room to sing to me and keep me company. And with the money I get for the shoes I make I shall buy food for my mother and myself."

The stranger walked with the lad down the road. At a cottage door he saw the boy's mother looking out for him, with a face filled with love. The linnet and the starling saw the boy coming, and began to speak and sing to him. And the boy's face glowed with joy.

"Ah!" said the stranger to himself, "that boy is happier than I am."

It was contentment that enabled the boy to be so happy.

He took his lameness as God's gift: his mother, his starling, his linnet, his own happy heart, were God's gifts too.

He was content with such things as he had. His "contentment was great gain."

Now I will tell you how a father cured another boy of *discontent*.

Near a part of London where there were a good many poor people lived a doctor once. He had a very nice home, and for a doctor was pretty well off; but he was not what is called a rich man.

This doctor's eldest son was named Henry,

and in the school holiday he went on a visit to his cousins, whose father was really rich. They had a fine mansion, and carriages, and riding horses and ponies for the children, and ever so many things of that kind. Henry said to himself when he came home: "I have nothing, my cousins have everything, ponies and watches, and they can go where they will. But I have nothing."

Henry was discontented, and he let his father know how discontented he was. His father said: "But, Henry, although you are not rich, yet you have a good home, and your mother, and every comfort."

Henry only said: "I haven't the things that cousins have."

One day his father said to him: "Henry, I want you to come with me to-day." So father and son went off together. They came to a poor street, and then into a wretched court, and then they went up a poor stair to an attic, and in this attic was one of the doctor's patients, a poor lad, fast dying, all alone, in the room.



"Oh, doctor," said the poor lad, "I am so happy to-day. My brother Dick has been here, and brought me that beautiful rose tree."

The tiny rose tree stood on the window-sill, where the light fell on it, and the sick lad could see it.

"How do you feel to-day?" said the doctor.

"Happy, quite happy, for God loves me, and has given me a kind brother, and many friends to be good to me. My brother Dick travelled all night, ten miles, to bring me that rose tree. And God is so good to me. He has sent me a brother's love, and the light of a new day, and that lovely rose."

By-and-by the doctor and his son left the sick lad. And they walked home in silence. When they got into the bright, warm, well-filled house, Henry came close to his father and said: "Forgive me, father; I will try never to give way to discontent again."



## THE LITTLE THORN TREE

I *Timothy* vi. 6-9

(From a German Ballad by Friedrich Rückert).

CONTENTMENT is great gain.

Be pleased to be what you are, and  
Be pleased with the things you have.

Some children, when they grow a little  
and begin to look about them, and see there  
are houses grander than their own home,  
and people richer than their parents, begin  
to be discontented. Then they begin to put  
discontent into words, and say,—

The old house, it is too old.

The clothes, they are not fine enough.

The holidays, they are too short.

The people we know, they are not grand  
enough.

If we could only be richer, grander, finer-looking, and more surrounded by great friends!

Nothing they have pleases them; only something they have not would please them.

The German people are the great story-telling people of Europe. A famous story of theirs is about a tree. It is this:—

In a deep forest in the German land lived a little tree which had this kind of discontent. It was a thorn tree and might have lived a happy life, for it was strong, and nobody troubled it. But it was not satisfied. "Why do I have hard, bare, prickly thorns?" it said. "Other trees have leaves: I only ugly thorns. If I had my wish, I should have leaves of gold."

And although it is a strange thing to tell, the little thorn tree had its wish. When the next day dawned, it saw that it had leaves of gold. And the light of the sun shone on the golden leaves, and the tree made a splendid show.

The little tree laughed for joy.

But in the midst of its joy a robber came. "Gold!" he cried, "leaves of gold! That is splendid for me." So he plucked off every leaf, put them in his pockets and went on. At night the poor tree was quite bare.

It was very much cast down. But once more it was allowed to wish. And this time it wished leaves of glass. So leaves of glass grew on the branches. And the morning sun came out and shone on the leaves, and it was a great sight. The little tree clapped its hands for joy.

But when night came, there arose a storm. It came crashing through the wood, breaking the branches, overturning the trees: at last it came to the little glass-leaved tree. And with one mighty blast it shattered the leaves into fragments.

And the little tree had sorrow once more.

But once again it was allowed to wish. This time it wished for green soft leaves like other trees. These came, and then, when it was glad for their beauty, the little goats came and began to lift up their mouths, and

bite and nibble, until before night every leaf was eaten, and the tree was bare.

Then the discontented tree saw its folly. "I was not pleased with my thorns," it said. "But thorns are best for me." So it wished back the thorns, and the thorns came back. Robbers did not touch them; storms did not break them; goats did not eat them. At last with the things given by its Maker it was contented.

Be content, dear children.

## *JUDGE NOT BY APPEARANCES*

*John vii. 14-31*

**E**VEN a child has got to judge sometimes.

You are judging when you say: These are rude children; we will not play with them. You are judging when you say: These are good children; we will keep by them. But it is a very hard thing to judge aright. To judge aright, we should see the hearts of people. And only God can see the heart. We can only judge by the appearance; the outside only is what we see. Now our Lord here tells us not to judge in that way. Those who judge in that way are sure to go wrong. Why did the Lord say this? Because the people in Jerusalem judged Him in that way.

They saw a poor man, one whom nobody



even knew at school, one who had done a work of healing not long before on a Sabbath day, and, *looking at the appearance*, the poor dress, the homely speech, they said: Oh, that man is too poor to be good. Looking also at this, that He had been working on a Sabbath day, making a man who was sick whole, they said: A good man would not do any work on a Sabbath. He must be bad. But it was the Lord Jesus they judged in that way.

Now this is a lesson much needed. There are so many who judge people by appearance, and often judge good people to be bad. They say. Oh, that person is always praying or talking about religion, speaking about the soul; it is just pretence, just hypocrisy. He's such a tiresome man, that, with his talk about religion.

Some young people think that everybody who talks about religion is only pretending, and is a hypocrite.

It is now a good many years ago since, on a Rhine steamer, a stranger, an Englishman,

was judged in this way. He had been indeed giving away some tracts, and among those to whom he gave a tract was a company of young men playing cards. "Such pretence!" they said. "A regular hypocrite!" said the captain. But he had given one of his tracts to a lady, the Countess D——, and she judged him in a better way. As the steam-boat went up the Rhine, the passengers came to know each other a little better, and then it turned out that this stranger was going to do a very just thing. He had once been an officer in the army, and in the wars he had bought a horse from a German officer, and before he could give him the money the German officer and himself were ordered different ways, and he lost all sight of the gentleman from whom he had got the horse. But he put the price of the horse in the bank to gather interest year by year, and after long years in some way or other he learned that the officer was still alive, and now he was going to him with the price of the horse and interest for the delay in paying

At the end of the voyage, however, a strange thing happened. The luggage of this English traveller was not to be found. It had been stolen or left behind, and he had no money and could not speak a word of German.

Now this lady of rank, being a Christian, had been present when he gave the tract to the card-player and had after that heard the story of his life. She went up to him, and although she could read, yet she could speak no English, but she held open an English Testament at Acts xvi. 15, it reads thus: "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." So he went, and by-and-by the missing bags were found. Then this just man said: "Although I cannot offer you money for your hospitality, I must give what would have been my hotel bill for your schools."

Do not judge by appearances; do not look down on any one or judge harshly.

### *THE LEGEND OF ST. BRANDAN*

**M**Y dear children: in the Middle Ages—that means a good many years ago, a good long while before any of you were born—in those far-off times the people told strange stories and dreamed strange dreams. And at the heart of their strange stories and dreams there were often some good words and lessons for children both old and young.

Now somewhere in the north country of the world, where snow and ice are common, and the wind blows cold and the waves run high, there lived in those times a holy man called Brandan; and after his death he was called St. Brandan. And he used often to sail in the cold north seas, going from one country to another to preach the gospel.



Well, somebody dreamed this dream about St. Brandan, and they made a story of it; and it is this story I am going to tell you this morning.

It was Christmas night, and St. Brandan was sailing on the seas which are near the North Pole, and as he sailed he passed a great iceberg—a mountain of ice,—and there seated on the ice he saw the traitor Judas—the man who sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. And Brandan said, “Art thou really Judas?” And Judas said, “I am he; my dwelling-place is in the evil place—the place prepared for the devil and his angels. But once every year, for one brief moment or two, I am permitted to leave that place and come here because once in Joppa I flung my cloak to a poor leper.”

And St. Brandan passed, wondering at the greatness of the justice of God, and at the goodness that would not let even one good deed pass unrewarded. And no doubt in some way he put that or something like that into a sermon, and said that it is by the



things we do—little things and great things, good things and things evil—we shall be judged at the last day.

And no doubt the man who told the story heard that sermon and went home and dreamed his dream.

But the lesson in it is this: it is by the good things we do, by the kindness we show, that we please God.

## THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE

2 *Chronicles* v. 7-12

HERE is the story of a young king. He began life well: he began it with prayer. He prayed for the best thing, and God gave him both that and the second-best as well.

"Give me grace to do my duty as a king," Solomon prayed. And God said: "Because you asked *that*, and not riches or honour, you shall have riches and honour and length of years."

Now we are all thinking just now of Queen Victoria, and looking back fifty years to the time when she was young like Solomon.

And it is a happy thing we can say that she began her reign well: she began it with good resolutions and with prayer.

Last Tuesday at the meeting of ministers, when I was present, one of our number, Dr. Lundie, ascended the pulpit. He spoke as follows:—"I will be good," said Alexandrina Victoria at the age of twelve. About that time her mother thought the period had come to let the young princess know the exalted destiny which awaited her. As she was set to draw out the genealogical tree of English royalty by her tutor. Dr. Davys, the truth dawned upon her, 'Mamma,' said the gentle girl, 'I cannot see who is to come after Uncle William unless it is myself.' She was told that her surmise was correct. 'There is splendour,' said the thoughtful child, 'but there is responsibility.' Then lifting up her forefinger and giving her hand to her governess, she said earnestly, 'I will be good.' And she has been good. As her noble-souled husband won the title of 'The good Prince Consort,' she has fairly established her claim to go down to the ages as 'The good Queen Victoria.' In any case, this day would

have been celebrated by the nation. But it is because our Queen, during fifty years of sovereignty over the greatest empire in the world, has kept the promise of her thoughtful childhood that the heart of the united nation beats to-day with tender love as well as with ardent loyalty, while the bells ring out and the salvoes sound the general rejoicing, 'She has been good.' It was fifty years yesterday (June 20, 1837) since King William IV. breathed his last. At early dawn the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the Lord Chamberlain and the royal physician, drove up to Kensington Palace, the residence of the princess. With some difficulty they roused the sleeping household. In a few minutes Alexandrina Victoria came down in her dressing-gown, a shawl hastily thrown round her, her hair hanging loosely down and slippers on her bare feet. They addressed the girl as 'Your Majesty.' With tears in her eyes, but with quiet dignity, she held out her hand to be kissed. 'Will your Grace pray for me?' she said to

the Archbishop ; and the venerable prelate and the maiden Queen knelt together to ask the guidance of Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. Next day (*i.e.* fifty years exactly from this day) she was proclaimed from the windows of St. James's Palace. So began the reign of one of the most illustrious of English sovereigns."

What a good Queen she has been ! and how greatly the people love her !

It was God who blessed her and made her good. Nations should pray for their rulers.

If you live fifty years, may there be many to call you blessed. That will be if you keep the promise of your youth and be good till you are old.

It is fifty years since she began to reign, and nearly all the kings of the civilized world came to wish her joy on the fiftieth year of her reign.

On Tuesday she rode with kings and princes and great people to Westminster Abbey to give thanks to God.

On Wednesday she came to Hyde Park to



see thirty thousand children from the day schools who met to honour her fiftieth year.

Do you know what was over the gate as she entered? A great velvet banner, and these words written on it:—

“God bless our Queen,  
Not queen alone,  
But mother, queen  
And friend in one.”

*"IN THE YEAR THAT KING UZZIAH  
DIED"*

*Isaiah vi.*

LAST week a great king died, an old man, greatly beloved, the Emperor of Germany.

In the old times in which the story in the Old Testament is told we read that kings died and were buried with their fathers. Thus—long ago—just as now kings had to die. Their being kings did not alter this.

In this chapter mention is made of a king's death, and I want you to see what is set before us.

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up."

The earthly throne is empty ; then the Lord

"THE YEAR KING UZZIAH DIED" 137

opens the eyes of a young man in Jerusalem, and he sees a throne that is never empty.

A throne high and lifted up, the throne of God.

People said: "If the old emperor dies, everything will go wrong in the earth."

God says to Isaiah: "Behold, I reign; My throne is never empty."

Kings pass, but God remains.

That is the vision, that is the thought, you are here taught, when kings die.

And it was in this very year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah was called by God to be a prophet, to speak for God, to help to pull down bad things and build up good things.

Isaiah was very much afraid. He said to himself: "I belong to people that are not good; I am not myself as good as I ought to be."

But God sent one of His angels to him, and told him that his sin was forgiven.

Then God said: "Who will go for Me?" and Isaiah said: "Send me."

## 138 "THE YEAR KING UZZIAH DIED"

The kingdom of God is ever alive. Kings die; but young people are raised up to help God in the affairs of His kingdom.

"In the year that King Uzziah died," that is the date when Isaiah saw the vision of God and was called to be a prophet.

Kings die, and even nations perish; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Perhaps the year that the old Emperor of Germany died may be a memorable date for some of you.

What a blessing if this year you should see a vision of the King of Heaven, and if He should speak to you, and say: "What child will live to Me?" and if you should receive grace to answer: "Here am I; Lord, help me to live to Thee"!

## *PROVIDENCE*

### I

I READ this story once, and I repeat it to you now as one instance of God's answer to prayer.

On the edge of a great forest lived a woodman and his family.

One day a tree fell on the woodman and crushed him badly, and he lay long months in bed. The summer passed, and he was still in bed; then the winter, and the spring.

His family became very poor, every day poorer, until at last they had nothing to eat but what they were permitted to gather in the wood.

One spring morning the mother took her children to the front of the house and knelt down and asked God for bread.

And on that same morning it happened that a painter, going to the wood to paint a pic-



ture, saw under the green leaves and shadows of the wood this group kneeling in prayer.

He saw the poor mother and her children kneeling in front of their poor cottage. It was a beautiful sight, and while they prayed he quickly drew a picture of them.

Then, when they rose from prayer, the artist went to the mother and said he would give her a sovereign if she would allow him to remain beside the cottage for a little and take portraits of herself and her children. And she did.

So God heard her prayer. He sent bread that day for the children, the husband and herself, and by-and-by her husband was able to go out again and begin work.

I do not know more of this story. But I know this: God sometimes answers prayers in a direct, immediate way.

## II

WHEN we read of war, we think what a dreadful thing it would be if an army with

guns and swords were to land upon our shores and march in upon our towns and our homes.

Well, God's people have often known what that terror was, and many stories are told of how He has sent His angels to deliver them.

I heard a story once of an old lady—and old people are children of God as well as young people—and it was a time of war, and in her village the word went, "The Cossacks are coming." Now the Cossacks were wild, terrible and cruel soldiers. And all the people fled. But this old lady said: "I am old and feeble, and cannot flee." So the neighbours fled and she remained. And the night fell. And she heard the tramp, tramp of the soldiers, but fainter and fainter. They never came; they went into the other houses, but not into hers.

In the morning they were gone. But when she looked out, the country all around was covered with snow, and God had made the snow fall on a hedge between her home and the road. And she knew it was God,

for she said: "'Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling His word.'"

The snow was God's angel.

"Though the night be dark and dreary,  
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;  
Thou art He who, never weary,  
Watchest where Thy people be.

"Though destruction walk around us,  
Though the arrow past us fly,  
Angel-guards from Thee surround us;  
We are safe if Thou art nigh."

### III

It happened once in Poland (that too was in a time of war) that a band of soldiers came to a little town, and for some reason the general ordered it to be burned.

But the minister of the church, when the news of that order reached him, took twelve boys from the choir and marched them down to the general's tent and sang a hymn, and the general's heart was moved, and he spared the town. So you see the minister and his choir were like angels of mercy in saving their town.

In a village near Warsaw lived a pious

peasant named Dobiny. When he became old and poor, he could not pay his rent, and was to be turned out of his home the next day, and it was winter.

As he sat in sorrow the church bells rang for evening prayer, and Dobiny began to sing,—

“Commit thou all thy griefs  
And ways into His hands.”

And there was a tapping at the window. This was a raven that Dobiny's father had taken from its nest when young, and had tamed.

Dobiny opened the window to let in the raven, and there was a ring set with precious stones in its mouth.

Dobiny took the ring to the minister, and he saw by the crest that it belonged to King Stanislaus, and he took it to the king.

And the king built a house for Dobiny, and took him into his own service, and he never knew want again.

“The raven, the ring, the minister, the king,” these were God's angel-host for Dobiny.



## IV

IN a humble cottage in a valley in Switzerland, below a great snow-covered mountain, three children happened one night to be left alone. Their mother was dead, their father away on a journey. They were called Robert, Franz, and Theresa.

During the night the children awoke suddenly, and cried to each other: "What is that?" and then dropped off to sleep again.

But by-and-by they found themselves awake again, and could not sleep. Not a bit of light came through the shutters or the doors. What a dark night it must be! —no moon, no stars.

Then Theresa, the eldest, began to tell stories to her two brothers till day should dawn. But for them the day did not dawn. Then Franz was hungry, and the other two were hungry, and Theresa got up and looked about for matches, but could find none. Her father had locked them up, but she found some bread and milk for her brothers.

Then the eldest boy, Robert, said he would



look out, so he unbolted the door, and the door seemed to burst open, and a great mass of snow fell in upon him and nearly covered him.

Then the terrible truth flashed on each of them. They were buried in the snow. What awoke them in the night was an avalanche; a mass of snow falling from the mountain had buried their cottage.

Then they cried on their father, but they saw how foolish that was. Then one said, "Shall he be able to find us?" but Theresa said, "God knows where we are, and He will not forsake us."

"If I could only see you!" said little Franz to Theresa. Then they began to pray. But for the most part the children sat holding each other's hands.

Many hours passed. Franz got very hungry, very faint, but he got gentle in his trouble. Robert broke out into a burst of tears, and threw himself crying on the bed.

The hours went past very slowly.

No sun, no moon, no stars. "Oh, Theresa," cried little Franz, "when will the King of

Glory pass by?" for now they began to think of death. But just then they all heard a thud upon the roof of the house, then thud upon thud, then a little gleam of light came, then a voice, "Franz Hofmeister, are you there?" Franz was too weak to reply, but Robert answered with a great shout,—

"Yes, neighbour Ulric, we are all here."

And by-and-by neighbour Ulric and other friends had made a way to the door, and were in and had the children in their arms.

And soon they were carried out to their father, who, afraid lest they might be dead, had not strength to go near.

"Thank Ulric, our good neighbour," said the father. Franz put his arms round Ulric's neck and pressed a kiss on his cheek, and said, "Thanks, dear Ulric: I will never forget you."

And these children never did forget their deliverer.

They were buried.

They were raised again.

It was a resurrection.

They kept the day as a day of thanksgiving ever after year by year all their life.

## *THE VOICE OF GOD*

### I

ONE of the most wonderful things in our life is that God speaks to us. Although we cannot see Him, we can hear His voice. Adam and Eve heard it in the garden, Moses heard it at the burning bush, the children of Israel heard it in the wilderness.

In an old Jewish book there is a story which helps us to see how great a wonder the voice was to the children of Israel. They were at the foot of Mount Sinai when they heard it. The mountain was covered with smoke. Lightning flashed out of the darkness; great peals of thunder shook the air; the ground trembled; the priests blew terrible blasts through their trumpets; the

people were crying out in fear. In the midst of their terror there rose quietly above the roaring of the storm a still, clear sound. It was the voice of God. Everybody heard it. It seemed to come from everywhere. "It is coming from the south," cried some; "It is coming from the north," cried others. When they turned to the south, they heard it sounding in the north; when they turned to the north, they heard it coming from the south. "It is in the east!" "It is in the west!" cried others. When the people turned to the east, they heard it sounding in the west; when they bent their ears to the west, they heard it in the east. As they were turning to every side to hear it, some cried out, "It is coming down from the sky." Then they looked upward, and, as they looked, they heard it rising out of the ground. It was everywhere—east and west, above and beneath, behind, before. It is everywhere still. Shepherds hear it in the lone fields when they are watching their flocks by night; sailors hear it when they



are keeping their outlook far out at sea ; it talks to soldiers on the evening before a battle ; it talks next day to those who are lying wounded on the battle-field. I know mothers who hear it as they are rocking their baby's cradle ; I have known students who hear it as they read their books. It is to be heard in the songs of birds and the murmur of bees, and there are friends of mine who tell me they hear it amid the crowds of great cities, in the unending tramp of the weary and the heavy-laden, and in the cries of the little arabs on the street. And always when it is heard it is a wonder. It is like some one speaking to us out of another world.

One good thing in that voice is that it always speaks to us in speech we know ; not in speech of foreign lands, or of nations long since dead, or of angels in the sky. It speaks to us in our mother tongue, in the speech of human beings, and for the most part in the speech of the human beings who have loved us and cared for us long. As



often as otherwise it speaks to us in words which a mother has used.

That is how it spoke to a young man in San Francisco, of whom I read the other day. It was forty years ago, when San Francisco was a wilder place than it is now. He was then hardly twenty years of age, and he was newly out from Scotland. His mother and he had been great friends; in some things she was more like a sister to him than a mother. Often in the evenings she would sing to him the simple songs she loved, and the songs sank into his heart and became a treasure to him there. He could not go where his mother's songs did not go with him. They were music to him all the way on the long voyage to San Francisco, and they did not forsake him there. A kind young fellow, who had come out two years before, took him in hand to show him the sights of the city. One evening he took him to the door of a gambling saloon; it was a horrible place to look into. Ill-faced men sat at long tables in little

groups, drinking, smoking, and playing cards. Nobody seemed to be speaking, yet there was a low murmur of sound floating over the room. "Come in," said the guide, "let us for once try our luck at the cards." He was about to enter, when there came up into his memory the lines of one of his mother's songs:—

"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?"

It was as if his mother spoke to him. It was the voice of God in the memory of his mother's song. He thought of the grief to her if she knew of his being present in such a place, or in such company. He took his friend's arm in his own and said, "Let us leave this place." A place of that kind was a temptation to him never more.

I do not know anything better worth learning about this voice than the times when it speaks to us. It speaks before and after our deeds. But it is its beforehand speaking we should set ourselves to regard.

In the land of Greece long ago there lived

a wise and good man named Socrates. He was one of the first of the wise men who took an interest in young people. In the city of Athens, in which he lived, he went up and down the streets offering his wisdom to all who would hear. The young men loved him, and liked to be in his company, and often spoke to him of the wonder his wisdom was. But Socrates never thought himself wise. He told them that what he said was only what his good angel, the voice of God in his heart, told him to say. It was always speaking to him. Especially it spoke to him when he was tempted to do evil things, or speak evil words, or neglect duties. It was a voice of warning. And he lived a noble life because he listened to this voice and obeyed it. When it told him not to do a thing, he never did it.

But it happened to Socrates as to One who was greater than Socrates. There were evil men in the city who could not bear that he should speak with the voice of God. And they brought him before the judges, and said,

"Either he must give up speaking at the bidding of that voice, or die." But he said, "To escape death, ye judges and men of Athens, can never be the great object of human beings. The great object is to flee from baseness and wickedness. I can die. I cannot cease to speak as my good angel bids me." So he chose to die. And the judges sent him to prison and to death.

It was noble to die in that way. But there are many who never listen to the voice when it is a voice of warning and speaks beforehand. They are tempted to do some evil thing, or, like Socrates, to leave off some good thing. The voice cries from within, "Do not leave off the good thing; do not do this evil thing." They shut their ears. They will not hear. Or there are other voices and other sounds in their hearts which keep them from hearing, and they give way to the evil. And, oh! there comes back to them once more the voice they refused to hear; but it comes back all changed, and not now a voice of warning, but of blaming and remorse.



There is a picture in our Gallery of Art which shows the awful difference of listening to the voice *after* instead of before. It is the picture of a wild heath. A lonesome place it is—no house, no road, no bridge to be seen in it all. There is only the dark, waving grass, the low brushwood in the forest, and, behind, the far-stretching heath, black with the shadows of heavy clouds. To the left of the picture a man is running, as if for his life. He is turning half round to see that nobody is pursuing him. A look of horror is in his face, and there, straight before you in the picture, is the cause of his terror. There, under the dark sky, half hidden in the brushwood, is the dead body of a man. The man who is running away is his murderer. He is hearing the voice of God, but it is after instead of before his evil deed. The voice of warning has become a voice of accusing. It is crying to him out of the depth of his soul, "Where is the living man who came with thee into the heath?" It will go on calling for that man as long as



he lives. It will follow him like an avenging angel. In the dark and in the sunlight it will speak to him. He will have rest from that awful voice never and never more.

## II

LISTEN to some further words concerning God's voice.

One of the best things connected with the voice is that when it speaks it is always near at hand. It is not a voice away up in heaven, so that we have to say, Who shall go up and bring it down to us? It is not far away over the sea, so that we have to say, Who shall go over the sea and bring it home to us? It is near to us. It is in our very hearts.

You have been born in a country in which the voice is sounding on every side, in which it speaks in almost everybody you know. It speaks to you in your mother's and your father's words. It speaks to you in the lessons of your school-books, and in

the words of your teachers. And what you hear when you enter a church is just the wisdom and music of this voice. And because you have been listening to it since your birth, it is near to you and in your very hearts.

Now, my dear children, this voice which is sounding everywhere round about you, which seems somehow as if it came down to us from heaven, and yet is all the while in our own hearts, which speaks to you often in the words and tones of your mother, and all the while and in every form is the voice of God,—this voice utters its best and sweetest call to us when it comes to us from the lips of the dear Lord who died for us.

And this is what I want to speak to you about now. The voice of God is Christ's voice. What we call the gospel is just this voice telling us of the Father's love. The Bible is the book of the words which this voice has uttered. The Gospels tell us how children liked to hear His Son.

You remember the words and where it is

said by the Saviour: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in." It is at the door of your hearts He is knocking. He is knocking to see if you will open your hearts, and let Him in to be a voice of God, a good angel, to you there. To every one who admits that voice, it will be like a pleasant song in the heart, like an angel of God always singing within you of righteousness and of God. It will be always with you: when you lie down at night, when you awake in the morning, when you are happy, when you are sad. Where you go it will go; where you dwell it will dwell.

Like the good angel of Socrates, it will warn you when an evil way is near. And if at any time you should come to a difficult place in your life, and do not know which way to turn, it will speak to you and say, "This is the way, walk you in it."

In the village of Lilliesden, a few years since, a brother and sister had to bid each other farewell in the afternoon of the day

on which their father was buried. He had been a very saintly man, but his saintliness did not pass on to his children. They loved him, but could never feel just as he felt when the things of the soul were spoken about. But now to those two, brother and sister, on this afternoon of the day of their father's burial, when their hearts were tender with sorrow, and they thought back over all they had seen in their father, it seemed as if they had somehow missed their life, since they had missed feeling as their father did. And they agreed together to ask the Lord to enable them to feel as he did, and to walk in his ways. And they agreed further that whoever first felt the change should come right off and tell the other. More than four years passed before the change they longed for came. And it was to the brother it first came. It was a Sunday evening just like this, near the close of the year. He was listening, as he had listened many a time before, to the minister preaching. And as he listened, without warning of any kind, a



new life seemed to rise up in his soul. He felt as if Christ had entered into his life, and was speaking to him from within and comforting him, and stirring him up to come nearer to God. Suddenly he was in a new world. Everything spoke to him of God and of heaven. The change long prayed for had come. The Saviour had come into his heart, and was speaking glad words to him there. He saddled his horse next morning, and rode the thirty miles between his sister's home and his own and told her the joyful news. She saw by his manner that he had found the secret of their father's life. She saw the father's saintliness in everything he did. He was as a voice of God to her. It entered into her heart and became a good angel, singing of God all the day. It made her whole life a sermon for God. And he till he died and she till the last time I heard of her were voices for God, calling on all around them by the simple calling of their daily lives.

And that is the wish my heart is wishing



for you this evening. From my heart I wish that not only might the voice of Jesus in the gospel enter into you, but that you yourselves might become, in a way, by your daily lives, voices of God. John the Baptist was a voice speaking in the wilderness in an evil time. There is not one of you, however young, but may be a voice speaking for God in the time on which your young lives have fallen.

That is the work missionaries abroad and preachers at home are doing. They are calling on the dead to rise from the dead.

And those who hear the call become themselves voices joining in the call, and by their lives, their deeds, their words, they take part in this greatest work of God, and are helpers in this first resurrection of the dead.

And my best wish for each of you is that you may have a part in that voice which is going through all the world, and calling on dead souls and saying to them, "Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

## III

I SHOULD be so glad now if I could tell you something of the joy that springs up in the heart when God's voice is listened to, and the light He has kindled is followed. It is a joy like that of the angels.

This autumn, you will remember, we had some heavy storms at sea. And one of these storms came, unlooked-for, after a beautiful day. It was a Wednesday, in August. Hundreds of northern fishing-boats went out to sea, and many of them were far at sea when the storm burst forth. It was a fearful night; the rain came down in torrents, the wind blew a hurricane. At sea the fishermen were driven helpless before the wind; on shore the fisher-folk went up and down, wondering what was going on with those dear to them at sea. On the morning that followed—the storm still raging—a telegram came from Burghead to the crew of the lifeboat at Nairn to say that a vessel had been wrecked on an old sand-

bar about seven miles away. The men of the lifeboat were themselves at sea, battling for their own lives. But as many brave fellows as were needed offered to man the boat and go to the wreck. Everything seemed to be against them. The tide was out. It was a long and heavy pull over the sands before the boat could be launched. It was a task heavier still to row the seven miles to where the vessel was wrecked. But the heaviest toil of all awaited them when they came where the wreck was caught. The waves rose high as hills, and dashed upon the wreck, and then, sucking backwards for many yards, came on again with fiercer blows. The crew in the lifeboat had to catch their chance in the brief moments when the waves were rushing towards the vessel. In those brief moments, bringing their boat near, they saved nine men. A moment only was possible each time. In that moment the lifeboat drew near, a man jumped on board, and, one by one, all who were on the wrecked vessel were saved.

Only brave men could have done the work; only men with skilful hands and loyal hearts. But now they turned their prow back towards Nairn with their precious load. What a pull that was back over the seven miles—the wind beating fiercely, the waves terrible for size! The brave men never lost heart. On they came, nearer to safety by every stroke of their oars—nearer and nearer still. At last they turned the corner at Culbin Sands, and the harbour was in view. There, on the pier and along the shore, great crowds were watching. Although they could not share the brave labour of the lifeboat, they shared the sympathy of its heroic men. And when the lifeboat was sighted coming round the coast, a great shout of joy burst from the entire crowd. Louder and louder it rose, as, peering into the distance, the people discovered that there were saved people on board. But when the boat swept into the harbour, and it became known that every man of the wrecked crew had been saved, and when the very men, one by one, rescued



from death, stepped ashore, shouting could no longer express the joy that was felt. Many burst into tears, others seized the strangers and embraced them as if they had been sons and brothers.

It was the joy of angels, the joy that is in the presence of God over the saving of the lost. And a beautiful thing in this joy is, that the greater the deliverance has been, the higher and gladsomer is the joy. It is very high when sailors are saved from a wrecked ship; but it is as high as heaven when the salvation is from a wrecked life.

#### IV

I HAVE told you of the joy which rises in the hearts of the angels when the lost are saved. But fully to know the greatness of this joy I must now tell you how it works, and how high it rises, when people are saved who did not know they were lost. There are whole tribes of lost people who do not know they are lost, and who do not



want to be saved, just because they do not know they are lost. They are worse, far worse than sailors on wrecked ships, only they do not feel their lostness.

Far away from this, near the southernmost point of South America, is a land called Terra del Fuego, and the people who lived in that land fifty years ago were in this very case. They were lost, and did not know they were lost. About that time they were visited by a young man called Charles Darwin, who had seen many lands and many tribes, and he said they were the poorest, the most miserable, the least like human beings of any he had seen. "Poor wretches!" he called them. They had neither houses to live in nor clothes to wear; their speech was more like the cries of birds and beasts than the speech of human beings. They seemed to him to be without thought of almost any kind. Never, surely, was a people more lost than these. They had lost the likeness of God, in which God had made man; they had lost know-

ledge of God; church and school and home were lost. Instead of clothes they daubed themselves over with white paint. They were more like beasts of the field than men and women. But now to this race, which had lost the very memory of better or other times, and was itself lost in ignorance and beast-like ways, a way of salvation was opened up through the mercy of God. And here is the story of their salvation, as it was told by Dr. Parker at a great Church meeting in Hanley. There was found in the city of Bristol, between two bridges, a poor infant, thrown out there to perish. He was found on St. Thomas's Day. Because he was found between the bridges he was called Bridges for surname, and because he was found on St. Thomas's Day he was called Thomas for Christian name. And by-and-by this deserted child became the Rev. Thomas Bridges, and set his heart on going out into the heathen world to save souls. And to this very land of Terra del Fuego, of which I have been speaking, he was

sent. He listened to the strange speech of the wretched people; he caught the tones; he compared one with another; he made an alphabet of them. Then he made the letters into words; he wrote them down; he came to understand their speech, came to be able to speak to them. He told them the story of the love of God, told them all about Jesus. He translated the Gospels into their language, and taught them to read them for themselves. Through his ministry they were lifted up out of their poor, wretched, lost condition. A new life entered into them; they became human beings again; they became Christian worshippers; they built houses and dwelt in them; they were clothed and in their right mind. And it could be truly said of them, as of the prodigal in the parable, they were dead, and came to life again; they were lost, and were found.

When Charles Darwin heard of the change, something of the joy which angels feel entered into his heart, and he sent a

gift of money to the society which had sent Mr. Bridges out. Every lover of mankind must have felt in the same way. Over that work the angels in the presence of God, let us be sure, had a great joy.

Now I will tell you why I have spoken to you about the joy of the angels. 'It is because this is a joy which God wishes you to share. It is really the joy of God; it is joy in the presence of the angels; God's joy first, then the joy of the angels. And it is this joy which God is offering to His children when He invites them to take an interest and a part in the work of missions to the heathen, in the helping of the poor, and in the saving of the souls of the lost.

## V

VERY fair to see are your shapely bodies, your faces glowing with health, your eyes gleaming with life.

And very wonderful to think of is that something within you which no eye can see,



which listens to the words I am speaking, and understands the thoughts that are passing from my mind to yours.

But more wonderful still and more fair is that other something which listens to God and understands His thoughts; which catches the light that comes from His face and makes it a light in your lives.

This other something is what the Bible calls "the candle of the Lord." It is given to every one. It is shining in your hearts now, in some brightly, in some less brightly. I have seen its light many a time in the happy gleam of a child's eye. If I knew you, as you are known in your homes, I might see it in your words and deeds. It is the lamp or torch of God within your hearts; it is one of God's greatest gifts; it is a light to give light to you on the way to heaven; it is a light God expects you to bring still burning when at last you come into His presence.

In that city of Athens where Paul saw the altar to the unknown God, it was once,



in the old days, the custom to have games in honour of their gods and heroes. Among the games that were held was the race of the torch-bearers. Each runner received a lighted torch at the beginning of the race, and the runner who came first to the goal with his torch burning received the prize.

This race was held in honour of Prometheus, a hero of whom Athens and other cities in the old time were justly proud. He was the likeliest to Christ of any of their heroes, and he did a service to man that was only second to Christ's. It was he who first brought fire to men. The people then living believed that in his love and pity he went up to heaven and carried away the fire and brought it down to them. It was one of the greatest kindnesses any hero could do. Winter was made less wintry. Darkness was shut out of the home. Hearthstones were laid. Log-fires were kindled. The labourers coming in from the fields cold and hungry had a warm place to come to, and food well cooked. And in the long

winter evenings the family gathered about the fireside, and mothers spun, and daughters knitted, and little boys watched the shadows flickering on the wall, or listened to the stories that were told till it was time to go to bed.

No wonder people held torch races in honour of the hero who gave them blessings like these! The race itself was a splendid sight. The winning-post was in the city; the starting-place a mile and a half distant, among the groves of olive and cypress, where the great Plato kept his school. It was night when the runners started. How their torches must have flared in the night air as they came rushing up the hill! How sad for the runners whose torches flickered out! How joyous for the swift, strong youth who came first to the goal with his torch still burning!

The days when this race was run are long since past. The nations who kept it up are dead and gone. But to something like that race, only grander, we are still called by

God. We are called to run with patience the race that is set before us. Our very life is a kind of race, and every one born has to be a runner in it. I have seen this grander race, I have seen the runners, but in other cities than Athens and with other torches than those the Athenian runners bore. I know men and women in this very land who are running it, and striving to keep their torches burning as they run. I know boys and girls who have begun to run it. I am sure there are some of you now reading these words. It is to encourage you in this race, and to help you to keep your torches burning to the end, that I am speaking to you now.

I sometimes look back upon the years of my childhood. As often as I do, I see again the bright young faces which were around me then, bright faces, bright lives, eager young spirits, preparing, although they knew it not, to run this very race.

I can say truly of many of those companions, that the candle of the Lord, the

torch for God's runner, had begun to shine in their hearts. They were believers in God, in heaven, in the resurrection of the dead. They knew the story of Jesus, they believed in His love. Happy hearts! Happy children! I can say of them as I recall their forms, "The angels of God visited them in their dreams." Those young hearts were touched with the feeling of the nearness and goodness of God. I have heard them sing the twenty-third Psalm with voices filled with joy. And I have seen the tears running down their cheeks when the story of the Cross was told in their hearing.

Many of those young runners have long since finished their race. I have watched the careers of some through all the years of their life. I have seen the light burning in their words, in their deeds, in their very eyes. I have watched them at their tasks, when they looked to me like the servants of the Lord mentioned in the Gospel, whose loins were girded, and whose lights were burning. I have seen among them saintly



runners who came to the goal of their life their outward strength all spent, but their inner light freshly burning.

Ah! and I have also seen some of them coming to the end of their day whose lights had ceased to burn for years, and who had to lie down in the darkness they brought on themselves. I recall one who finished his race before he was twenty, and another who went on till forty, and both came to the end in darkness. Not one ray of the early faith or joy in God burning! All the light of the soul gone clean out through evil thoughts and ways!

Dear boys and girls, you are just setting out in this race, your torches are fresh and bright and brightly burning. God has kindled the light of the knowledge of His love in your hearts. That is His torch. Do you think it can be anything but a sorrow to Him, if any of you, if even a single one of you, should come into His presence at the end with this light of love gone out? He is very earnest in wishing that you try all you



can by His help to keep the light burning. And I think it must have been for girls, as young as some of you, that the Saviour told the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. He would have you all to be wise, to have your lamps trimmed and burning, and to come in with Him to the wedding feast. And do you know, dear girls, what that means? It does not mean coming in with Him when you die. It means coming in now—now, while you are young and strong and happy—into His life and joy, into His fellowship and truth.

But for this evening I must end. I have some stories of the torch race which some evening soon I shall hope to tell.

## "THE DEAD SHALL HEAR"

*John v. 25*

ONE day Jesus was preaching in Jerusalem, and He said, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." The people knew that He was speaking of Himself. And they were astonished at His word. Some said, they were words which only a bad man would speak. Some said, that He was taking words into His lips that only God should speak.

"Who ever heard," they said to each other, "of the dead rising at the voice of a man? The dead? They are still and do not hear us when we call. To make a dead man live again!—only God could do that. And this is a mere man, Joseph's son, from Nazareth." But when they turned round

again to listen, He was repeating the words: "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice."

But if those who thought and spoke in that way had known their Bible better and tried to know who He was who was speaking such words, they need not have been surprised. In the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel there is a vision of this very wonder.

One day God took the prophet to a valley that was filled with dead people's bones. "Look at these bones," He said; "they are dry, they are bones of the dead." Then He said, "My people are like these bones; they are dry and lifeless; mere dead bones; dead as these bones are dead." The prophet looked. The heap of bones lay before him. They were without sign or touch of life. The flesh was gone. The blood was spilled out. Bone was no longer joined to bone. In all the heap there was neither eye, nor ear, nor warm, grasping hand. A whole nation was pictured there, dead, turned into dry bones.

But God said to the prophet: "Speak to

these bones, and they shall live." And the prophet spoke as he was commanded. He spoke to the dry bones, and the bones heard his voice. And bone came to bone, and sinew to sinew, and flesh covered them, and skin, and blood came back into the veins, and eyes kindled in the eye sockets, and the red came into the cheek, and there was a movement, a stir, a rising up, and out of the heap of dry bones rose up a nation of living men and women. The dead heard the voice of the prophet, and those that heard lived. Never was a more wondrous vision shown to a prophet. It was a vision of dead souls brought to life again.

Now the world into which Christ came was like the valley of dry bones which Ezekiel saw. It was a world of dead souls. Sin had killed out the life which was once in them. The vision that Jesus saw was, in a different form, the same Ezekiel had seen. When He was living in Jerusalem it seemed to Him to be like walking over open graves with dead people in them.



The Lord was perhaps thinking of Ezekiel's vision when He said, “The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.” But He was thinking of a larger heap of dead people than Ezekiel saw: He was thinking of the dead of all nations and kindreds on the face of the earth; He was thinking of dead nations, dead races, a whole dead world. And, in His love and to make those who heard Him glad, He said, The hour is coming when all belonging to the world who shall hear My voice shall live.

Of dead people there are two kinds. There are the dead people in the actual graves, the people whose bodies are dead; and there are dead people whose bones and flesh and blood are still living, but whose souls are dead. It was dead people whose souls only were dead that Ezekiel saw the vision of; it was both kinds of dead people the Lord was speaking about. Both kinds shall hear His voice: the dead whose souls are dead, and the dead whose bodies are dead.

Now we shall have another talk about



this wonderful truth, and I shall try to make it all a little plainer to you.

I will tell you first of the dead whose souls are dead. The bodies are living; the souls are dead. Everything in them that should be thinking of God and heaven is dead. They can speak, they can think, they can buy, they can sell; but in everything that belongs to God they are dead. They do not know Him; they do not love Him; they do not care to think of Him; they do not live to Him. In relation to God they are just like dead people. The ear to hear His word is dead; the tongue to sing His praise is dead; the feet to go His messages are dead.

Of this kind of dead people Jesus said: "The dead shall hear My voice and live." And a great part of the Saviour's own preaching was preaching to the dead of this kind. The great Apostle Paul went among heathen nations to tell them about Christ. He also had to speak to dead souls. The nations he visited did not know God, nor care for Him, nor love Him. In relation to

God they were just like dead people; they were like the dry bones that Ezekiel saw. But when Paul spoke to them they came to life; something in their hearts began to listen; in Paul's words they heard the voice of the Son of God, and one by one the dead souls became living souls. Companies of once dead people joined together and became living Churches. And in Corinth, and Philippi, and Ephesus, and other cities, songs were sung to Jesus by living souls. Paul always looked upon such people as persons who had once been dead, but were now risen from the dead and alive.

The same thing happened wherever Christ's preachers went; dead souls heard the word, and those that heard began to live. Hundreds of years after Paul's time, preachers began to go into a great country covered with woods; it was a great wild country, among whose trees lived men and women, and wolves and bears. The men and women were ignorant of God; they had never heard of Him, they did not want to hear of Him:

in the things of God they were just like dead people. These were the people from whom the German and English nations have come. But men filled with the spirit of Jesus went into the woods and told them of Jesus and of His love, and His pity, and His death on Calvary; and the dead souls listened and believed and turned to God and became a great multitude of living souls.

A thousand years more passed, and in Germany and England the people of Christ began to think of nations that were still heathen, as they were once heathen, and they pitied them. They saw that they were dead souls, that they did not know God, that they worshipped idols, and were leading very poor and wretched lives. And holy men gave themselves to the work of preaching to those heathen nations. They spoke to the dead souls in those nations the word of Jesus; and the dead souls listened and heard and began to live. And now there are thousands and tens of thousands who were

once heathens and are now Christians, and who are living to God and serving Him.

And this will go on as long as there are dead souls in the world; the dead will hear the voice of Jesus as it comes from the lips of missionaries and preachers, of holy men and holy women, and Christ's word will come true. Those that hear shall live; they shall turn to God and become His people.

But it is time now to speak to you of the dead whose bodies are dead. The dead who are lying in the graves shall one day hear the voice of Jesus, and shall come up out of their graves. The dear Lord, who, in His preaching and the preaching of His Apostles and missionaries, has raised dead souls from the dead, shall raise dead bodies as well. He is a Saviour for both body and soul.

Last year, being in London, I went to see a show of pictures in the Grosvenor Gallery. They were pictures of battle-fields and war. Among the pictures was one of a whole company of soldiers lying dead in a field. They had been attacked by enemies the night be-



fore and shot down, and they were lying where they fell. Only their heads were visible, their bodies were covered by the long grass of the field. It was a dreary picture. Desolation and death lay upon it, and it was pitiful as well. At the top of the field stood a priest with a book in his hand, and behind him a single servant. The priest was praying for the dead. It was a kindly service. But the poor fellows on the grass heard no word of his prayer; hearing and fighting were over for them for ever; they were dead, and no man could bid them back into life again.

But this which the good priest could not do the priest's Master can. The hour is coming when those very soldiers and all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of that Master and come out of their graves.

I cannot tell you what this great wonder shall be like. It is high above me; I cannot understand it. I have seen a red new-ploughed field in spring, and a seedsman stepping over it scattering the seed. I have



seen the same field in harvest all covered with yellow corn. It will be a wonder as great as that. The dead shall hear the voice of Jesus, and they shall come up out of their graves.

In the chapel of the Liverpool workhouse there is a monument to a Christian lady who once lived in that workhouse as an angel of mercy. The monument is a statue of the Angel of the Resurrection. He is sitting waiting for the hour of it. Across his lap is lying the trumpet by which he is to tell the hour. The hour is coming. Every year brings it nearer. The angel shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow, and in the sound the dead shall hear the voice of Christ, and the graves shall give up their dead.

Everything in the world shall seem to be going on as at other times. Men shall be building houses, and sailing ships, and buying and selling, and marrying and giving in marriage; children shall be hurrying to schools; trains shall be filled with passengers and rushing from town to town; then, sud-

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denly, the sound of the trumpet shall be heard, and all over the world people shall have a new look in their eyes: their very bodies shall be seen to be changing their forms, and every one shall be saying to his neighbour, "The dead have heard the voice of the Son of God and are rising out of their graves."

*"THOU SHALT NOT COVET"*

*Joshua vii. 1*

THE story of Achan is one of the saddest in the Bible. It is a story of evil-doing, and of the sore death that fell on the evil-doer. But it is not that which makes it the saddest. It is this, that the death which fell on the man who did the evil did not stop at him, but reached over and fell on his innocent children, and on the very lambs of his flock.

"They took Achan, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and all that he had; and all Israel stoned them with stones and burned them with fire."

That is the story I am going to tell you. I am going to tell you of the great evil

which Achan did, and of the evil thoughts which led him to do it, and of the terrible death which he and his had to die for his doing of it.

Achan was a farmer. He was not a poor man. He had oxen and asses and sheep, and he had sons and daughters to attend to them. And like the other farmers of Israel at that time, he was a soldier. And like every soldier, he was bound to be true to God, his great King. And with the other soldiers he had to fight in the battle against Jericho. The Lord gave them a great victory over Jericho. It was a city surrounded by walls. The walls fell at the sound of the trumpets of Israel. And all the city, and all its gold and its silver, and its brass and its iron, and the beautiful garments of its citizens, fell into the hands of Israel. Now before the battle the Lord said to the fighters, "The gold and the silver, the brass and the iron, shall belong to Me, shall be wealth for Me, and everything else shall be destroyed." So that if a soldier came on a beautiful gar-

ment or anything else that was beautiful it was to be destroyed. But if he came upon gold or silver it was to be given over to God.

As Achan was fighting in the streets and in the houses he came upon a heap of things rich and beautiful. There was a dress made in Babylon, the richest that could be made in those days, and there was a heap of silver and a wedge of gold. Up till that moment Achan was a brave fighter. He was doing the hard and difficult work of a soldier. But what he now saw made the sword arm drop to his side. He was alone. A moment had come to him when he had a more difficult battle to fight than that against Jericho: he had to fight against himself. But he did not fight this difficult battle. He saw before him, wholly within his reach, the glorious rich robes, the Babylonish garment, and the silver and the gold. It was his duty there and then to have taken them to his officer. But he did not take them to his officer. He kept looking at them. Perhaps he said within his heart, It can do no harm to look at



them. But it was an evil heart which spoke in this way, and the evil heart deceived him. It said to him, No, there is no harm in a look, or in a second, or in a third look. And by-and-by he could do nothing else but look. He forgot his task as a soldier. He saw the rich spoils. He stood still where they lay, and still he looked.

But now a new thought came into his heart. His heart had just said to him, "There is no harm in looking at the goodly things." In the same heart now rose up the desire to have them for his own. And he gave way to this desire: In his look now there was the hunger of an evil wish. He coveted the silver and the gold that belonged to God, and the Babylonish garment, which he ought to have destroyed. Up till this moment he was innocent, or nearly innocent. But now he was reaching out his heart to things that did not belong to him. He coveted them. In the New Testament it is said that covetousness is idolatry: when an evil heart leads any one to wish for him-

self what is not his own, it is like giving worship to a false god. And possibly, in the short, swift moments in which Achan did the evil deed, he still had time to admire, and in his own soul praise, the riches and the beauty of the spoils. It was an evil new step he was taking. But even yet, if he had remembered the true God, and that he was a soldier for the true God, he might have escaped the snare into which, as a silly bird, he was flying. But he put the thought of the real God away from him. For the moment the silver and the gold and the Babylonish garment, as they lay together in one heap, were his god. He hungered after them. All that was good and brave and upright in him bowed down before them. His evil thought was hastening to become an evil deed.

And at last it became the evil deed. He shut the eyes of his soul to God and honour and duty, and reached out his hands for the spoils. He took them. And only think what a distance and in how brief a time he had

now travelled in sin in doing this! He was a thief now. It was no longer a look, a thought, a wish: it was a deed. He had done the evil. He took the goodly things—the things that were not his own, but God's. Yet, perhaps, even then, the evil heart within went on deceiving him. Perhaps it said to him, as it has so often said to evil-doers, "You are not worse than others. Others, if they had this chance, would do as you desire to do. And it is only a fool who would throw such a chance away." But whether the evil heart spoke to him in these very words or no, he took the splendid dress and the silver and the gold.

And last of all he hid them. Once more his evil heart deceived him. "Hide them," it said. "Nobody knows—nobody has seen—nobody can ever know." So he rushed by hidden ways, carrying the spoil out from the city, away to the camp, to his own tent. And there he dug a pit, and in that pit he put the things—the silver and the gold and the Babylonish garment. And

there was a moment—one short moment—as he covered up the spoil with earth, when his heart had joy. Nobody had seen him. Nobody knew what he had done. The things were safe in his keeping. Alas! Somebody had seen him. One was looking on all the time he was hungering for the goodly things; somebody followed him from the city, along the hidden ways, and into his very tent. God had seen all. God knew the evil he had done.

And by the power of God all the hidden evil came up into the light. And the gold, and the silver, and the Babylonish garment were dug up and brought forth in the face of all the people of Israel. And Achan, the soldier that should have given up the spoil, the farmer that had oxen and asses and sheep of his own, and was not driven by poverty to steal—Achan, the father of gallant sons and daughters, whose honour and well-being he should have cared for—was brought forth to die.

But it is this that troubles me in telling



the story. He was not brought forth alone. His sons and his daughters were at his side. They had done no part of the evil. They had not coveted what belonged to God. But, all the same, they had to die. It is this that makes the story one of the saddest in the Bible.

I have listened to people who, reading this story, have cried out against the Jews. "So cruel," they have said; "so pitiless, so inhuman!" Yes, I used to think in that way. But it is long, long ago. I find that that old Jewish law by which the innocent children had to suffer with the guilty father is still the law of the loving Providence that is working good to us every day. If a father lowers himself to become a thief to-day, in this very land where so many kind hearts live, his children will suffer for his sin. They will not be put to death, as Achan's children were, but they will suffer in a way that is harder to bear than death.

And, dear boys and girls, it is not only children who suffer when parents do evil,



but it is also, and oftener far, parents who suffer when children go wrong. I read two or three years ago of a young man in a merchant's office who took money from his master's desk. When his mother was told of it, she swooned and never came back to life. I knew a young man once who went away with a beautiful girl on his marriage tour, and on his return was arrested for dishonest handling of money in his office. He was sent to prison for seven years: and a blight that was worse than death fell upon the life of his beautiful bride, and upon the home to which she belonged.

We cannot do evil that will hurt only ourselves. Every sin, every crime, reaches out and gathers others within its evil net. This is the lesson I leave on your hearts at this time: it is the lesson that the story of Achan gives forth. If we sin, we bring all who love us, all who lean upon us, all whom we ought to honour, within the shadow and shame of what we have done.

## SIN FINDING OUT THE SINNER

*Numbers xxxii. 23*

I HAVE often spoken to you about the goodness of God. And I have told you of things fair and pleasant by which that goodness is made known. But there is one proof of His goodness I have never named to you. It is the fact that, in making the world, He made it impossible for evil to hide. Sooner or later the evildoer is sure to be found out.

Sin is so bad, so hurtful, so cruel a thing that God's love for us will not let it remain unpunished. And, because it might escape discovery by man, He has caused that it shall be its own detector and punisher. Lies, thefts, murders, prides, greeds, envies—they turn round, one way or another, and smite the doers of them. The white cheek, the red blush, and the downcast eye, which are seen

in the faces of people discovered in an evil way, are just sin's ways of beginning to find out the sinner.

It was Moses who first said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." He was speaking to thousands of people at the time. If thousands of people should agree together to sin, their sin will find them out. But the words are as true of one as of many. In God's world evil cannot hide. In God's world evildoers are certain to suffer for the evil they have done. This is the lesson I want to give you to-day.

A little more than fifty years since, a ship sailed out of Archangel in the White Sea on a long voyage into the Indian and Chinese seas. When the ship was far on in the voyage, a trouble rose up between the sailors and the captain. And one night the sailors joined together and killed the captain. The two mates stood by the captain and fought against the sailors. They also were killed. Then the sailors took the ship into their own hands. But when this dreadful

work was past and there was a new captain and new mates, they began to be afraid of each other. And it was remembered that two of their number had cried out, "Don't kill the captain." One night these also were killed and thrown overboard. And still they were afraid. There is no peace to evildoers. In the cook's galley there was a young lad who had taken no part in the murders, but he was seen to tremble when the bodies of the dead sailors were cast overboard. Perhaps he might tell when they got to land. They were passing a desert island, far away from the usual course of ships, and they made pretence to go ashore for water, taking the young assistant cook with them. And there, while he was sent into a valley out of view to search for water, they left him, and sailed away. They had just this little touch of pity, or it might be in their hurry to get away—they left a gun and powder-bag on the shore.

Two years passed. And out of the usual path though it was, another ship happened



to pass this very island, and sent ashore to seek water. And there, under the shelter of some rocks, the searchers came upon the bones of the sailor lad, and his gun lying by his side. The poor lad had seen that it was death for him. And with a nail or a sharp stone he wrote on the stock of the gun the whole story of the mutiny and the murders, and the names of the ringleaders and of the murdered men.

The bones were buried in the lonely island ; the gun was carried to Archangel. And in a few months the murderers were tried and judged to death. In this strange way their sin found them out.

But this discovery might never have been made ; the murderers might have escaped punishment : yet their sin would none the less have found them out. Their sin would have found them out by its effect on their own souls. This will be made plain to you by the story I am about to tell.

Towards the middle of the last century, two sons of a Highland gentleman had a



quarrel. It happened, while the rage of anger was still in their hearts, that the elder of them had to leave home for a distant town. And, his way passing through a lonely moor, he met his brother returning from a walk. The rage sprang up from their hearts into bitter words, and then into blows. And in the struggle the younger brother was struck down by a blow on the head. He did not spring up again; he did not attempt to rise; he was never more to rise: he was dead.

In a moment horror took hold of the elder brother. His sin had found him out. He was a murderer. He threw himself down beside the body of his brother. He called him by name. He cried to him for pardon. But no ear was open to hear his cry. Life was for ever gone. Then a new horror seized him. He himself would have to die for this crime. And shame and heart-break would fall on his father's home. He looked around. Not a single creature was in view. He lifted the dead body in his arms; he

carried it to a kind of bottomless pit in the moor, and threw it in. He heard the awful thud of it far down. And then he flung in furze and bracken and stones to cover. After that he continued his journey. The murder was never discovered.

But from himself it refused to hide. The memory of it was with him every day thereafter. It was his first thought in the morning, his last at night. It was with him in his waking thoughts; it was with him in his dreams. Like a book, his memory laid bare its pages, and he saw over again the lonely moor, the battle between the brothers, the lifeless body, the white face, and the black pit into which the dead was thrown. He could not bear to live in the Highland home. Everything there seemed to call out to him for his dead brother. He travelled. He went into business. All was in vain. His memory threw up the terrible story from within, and made pictures of it in his soul. And day and night he had no rest from the memory of his sin.

One Sunday evening he was staying in a village on the coast of Fife, and a minister very famous in Scotland at that time—the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine—was to preach in the church. Mr. Erskine's text was the sixth commandment—"Thou shalt not kill." When the sermon was over and Mr. Erskine resting in his lodgings, this poor man called on him and told him all his sad story. Twenty years had passed, and never till now had he breathed a word of it. But now he could no longer be silent. The sermon had searched him through and through. The thing he wanted to know was whether he should tell his crime and suffer the punishment of it. Mr. Erskine was very kind but very searching in his questions. Was it known that his brother was killed? Was any innocent person suspected? Was any one kept out of earthly goods which, if the brother had lived, would have come to him? When he got satisfactory answers to all these questions, he said: "No good public end would be served now by giving yourself up ;

you would not yourself find peace in that way. Nobody is wronged by your silence. Only God can help you. Tell Him the whole story. Throw yourself with all your heart and soul on His mercy and forgiveness; and in what remains of your life walk humbly with God, and do justly and mercifully to your fellow-men."

I do not know the rest of this man's story. If he took Mr. Erskine's advice, his sin would no doubt be forgiven by God. He would know, and he would live in the comfort of knowing, that, though the memory of the past could not be blotted out, he would not be shut out of heaven by his sin.

Now I know well, I have felt all through in speaking to you, that this is a terrible truth I have been setting before you. But in bringing my words to an end I will say this very earnestly to you:—You are young, and not yet as strong as you will be. And sin is very deceiving. And some day it might happen—it has happened to others as young as you—that sin, in some form or



other, might overtake you and deceive you, and you might yield to it. If unhappily this should befall you, remember that the great object should be, not to escape the punishment, but to flee from the sin. But if either you be discovered in it, or should yourself wake up to the thought, when as yet no one else knows of it, that God knows, and that your own memory has taken note of it and is keeping record of it to you—if this should happen—then, with your whole heart and strength, turn round and tell Him of the sin that has hurt you, and be sorry for it, and do not repeat, or wish to repeat it, and you will be forgiven. It is to bring us to seek this forgiveness that He has made it a law in the world that our sins shall find us out. Sin found out and forgiven, that is the meaning of the beautiful words, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool."



### *AN INHERITANCE*

THERE is one thing which perhaps boys in the country are more likely to do than boys in a town. They like to look away from the village in which they were born and the cottage in which they live and think of the days to come and of the things they shall then possess. They imagine themselves making a great lot of money, and living in great houses, and having servants to serve them, and carriages, and a great name among men.

It is such a pleasant thing for boys, before they learn how little power they have to shape the future, to fancy it filled with riches and grandeur which shall belong to them.

Early in the last century a poor boy was

attending a foundation school in an English village. He was a dreamer of dreams like these. Often in the play hours of the school he would go off alone to the river-side and seat himself under a spreading tree and dream his dreams. One day, while his schoolfellows were busy elsewhere with their games, he had a very great dream. Poor though he was, he was the heir of a family that had once been rich. The sorrowful thought took hold of him that his forefathers had let their riches go, and he sat there under his favourite tree turning the sad fact over and over in his mind: "This tree under which I sit," he said to himself, "belonged once to my forefathers. So did the river that is flowing past. So did the fields on the other side as far as the eye can reach, and the fields on this side, and the village and the village church, and the great mansions in the park, and all the villages and farms about; and now there is not one foot of it all in the possession of their children."

It was a very boyish thought which came into his mind after that sad one. But it really came into his mind, and would not go away. He said to himself: "If I live, I shall try to win back what my forefathers have let go. And this river flowing at my feet, and this tree under which I have so often sat, and all the fields and houses that once belonged to my family shall belong to them again."

And although it seemed at the time a mere dream and no more than a thought in a dream, all came to pass as he dreamed. He lived to carry out his thought.

Some friends of the old family took an interest in the boy, and got him sent out to India as a young clerk. He was well-behaved and attentive to his duties, and he was clever. Everything put under his care went well. He became a good soldier, a good leader of armies. He fought great battles and won them. He rose to be Governor of India, and became very rich. And when long years were past the people in

England knew of him as the famous Warren Hastings, of whom the books of English and Indian History have wonderful stories to tell. And then, when he was rich and famous, he returned to England, and bit by bit he bought back the lands which his forefathers had lost, and he became lord of the tree under which he dreamed his dreams, and of the river which flowed at his feet, and of all the fields and villages around.

Now I know, for I remember my own boyhood, that this is a story to set boys a-dreaming. Could not you go to some rich land far away, and come back with gold and silver, and buy fields and houses, and be lords in the land? Yes. Some of you may really do that very thing. But it can only be some of you—only a very few of you. There are very few boys in the world who are heirs to old families. It is only a boy here and there, even among such, to whom friends of his dead forefathers will come with help. And among boys helped by such friends, not one in a thousand will



be able to do the things which Hastings did. It is not easy to buy back a lost inheritance, or win a new one for oneself.

But do not think, because I say this, that you are shut out from such possessions. Every boy before me is the heir of inheritances grander than any that can be bought with gold. Listen, and I will tell you of one which the good Lord prepared for you before you were born.

You are the heirs of the greatest country upon the earth. Your native land belongs to you and to the boys and girls of this time. It belonged to your forefathers; it belongs to you now. Its hills, its valleys, its rivers and shores, they are yours. So is the story of its past years, and the memory of the great men and women who have lived in it and made it what it is. The churches and schools throughout the country, the judgment halls and palaces, the squares and parks in cities, the cities themselves, and all the labour that stirs in them, and all the crowds that live in them, they



are yours. If you went to live in another country, these things would follow you and visit you in your dreams, and you would say, "They are pictures from my native land." And you would think with pride of the grandeur of your country, and of the glory which God has given it among the countries of the earth. "Mine is a country," you would say to strangers, "the word of whose merchants is as good as gold; the speech of whose people is spreading over all the earth; the flag of whose ships is known on every sea." And you would rejoice in it and thank God for it, and tell how it stands for liberty and justice and help to the oppressed wherever it is known. Yes. You are heirs in your native land. Its great books, its poems, its sweet singers, its builders, its painters, its mighty captains, its brave travellers, they are yours. You can say—you have said—"These are the travellers and the captains and the sweet singers of my native land. They belong to me." No matter though you should be poor

and own neither castle nor park in all the land. The splendour of sunrise and sunset upon its mountains is yours. And if a great deed should be done by any of its sons, you have a share in the glory of that deed.

### *AN INHERITANCE IN HEAVEN*

THERE is just one drawback to our joy in the possession of the inheritance of which I spoke to you in the last chapter. We must one day leave it. There is no such drawback to the second inheritance I am to tell you of now. This is that inheritance "reserved in heaven," into which God's children enter when they die, and in which they remain for ever.

By what rich names it is named in the Bible! It is the heavenly country, the city of God, the new Jerusalem, whose streets are gold, the many mansions in the Father's house, and Paradise. Every child who loves God is an heir of this country. It belongs to him now, although his eyes cannot see

it. It is to that country he will be carried when he dies.

How shall I describe to you the grandeur of this better land, as it is set before us in the Bible? Earth has nothing so fair, so real, so good. It is the home of goodness and of truth.

When Joshua was describing the good land to which God had brought the children of Israel, he said, "It is a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

But the good things in the heavenly country are different from these. They are things that belong to the soul. They are the things that give pleasure to God. Innocence and peace and joy and truth and love in the hearts of the people of the country; these are some of the good things. And the throne of Christ is there. And Christ Him-

self. And those who live there have His friendship, and meet Him and serve Him every day.

It was to gather citizens for that country that Jesus came down from heaven. By His Churches and ministers He is gathering citizens for it still. The citizens He gathers are the best, the most loving, the truest of mankind. The fighters for God, the speakers of the truth, the helpers of the poor are there. So are the souls whose sins have been forgiven. Many who were poor on earth are there; and some who were slaves. In heaven they are rich and free and happy. It is the country of those who have been on God's side, and have been soldiers in His armies and workers in His workfields. The holy men and women of whom we read in the Bible are there. And the prophets and singers of psalms, and the disciples who followed the Lord upon the earth. And the apostles who spoke for Him after He went back to heaven. Mary, the mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, the mother of John; the poor



woman who broke her box of ointment and poured it on His feet; and Dorcas, who made little coats for widows and orphans; and the Elect Lady and Gaius, who opened their homes to the travellers who went about preaching the gospel: they are all there. And the missionaries of our own time who have gone to heathen countries to turn their people to God: Robert Moffat, Henry Martyn and Bishop Mackenzie, David Livingstone and William Burns, the missionary to China, and thousands more whose names I do not know. They are all there.

It is a rich, fair land, filled with things rich and fair, and with people whose hearts are filled with the love of God, and who love their neighbours as themselves. There is no quarrelling there. There is no envy. There is no hatred. It is a country where the people are of one mind and one heart. They strive to help each other, and serve the Lord who died for them, all they can.

And you, my dear boy, and you, my dear girl, if you love God, are heirs of this

happy land. It is yours now. But you will enter it and be happy in it more fully when you die.

People—even the people of God—do not think of this inheritance as often as they should. The beauty and sweetness of God's gifts to us in our earthly country blind our eyes. We are placed here in a world so fair that we do not care to think of the world in heaven that is fairer far. It is often only when trouble and sorrow descend upon us that we turn our thoughts to the better land. But it is one of the blessings of trouble that it inclines our heart to think of it. Many and many a time since the world began there was no comfort for the children of God except the vision of that better land.

The thirteenth century was a very wicked time in Europe. Troops of lawless soldiers went about overturning and destroying and working cruelty. The roads and woods were infested with robbers. The poor were trampled. No one was safe. No one was

happy. Good people had to hide themselves in houses of prayer to escape from the robbers. And it seemed to many that the end of the world was at hand.

In that dreary time arose two men of the same name who, looking through the awful gloom and misery, had a clear vision of the better country, and called on men and women to seek after it. The one was a poor monk, who lived in a cell at Cluny; the other was a great man, a ruler of monks, who lived in a great house at Clairvaux. Bernard was their name.

What Bernard of Cluny saw, as he peered through the darkness, was heaven itself. He saw it in glorious colours, all golden, all joyous, with Christ and the holy angels, and filled with holy men and women.

But what Bernard of Clairvaux saw was better still. It was the King of the fair, heavenly land. It was the dear Saviour who died for us. What he saw was the Person of Jesus. He saw the head that was crowned with thorns, and the feet that were

pierced with nails, and His hands and His side.

And each of them put what he saw into a hymn.

The poor monk who had only a cell to live in made the hymn you have so often sung:

“Jerusalem the Golden!  
With milk and honey blest:  
Beneath Thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed.

I know not, oh, I know not  
What joys await us there,  
What radiancy of glory,  
What light beyond compare.”

The rich Abbot of Clairvaux saw past that glory, and fixed his great heart on Jesus Himself:

“Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Saviour of mankind.”

I hope days so dark as those in which



the two Bernards lived may never again come to the earth. But if, as you go forward in life, a time of sorrow should come to you, do not forget this better country in heaven. Do not forget that you have been called to be heirs of a land where no night is, nor death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; an "inheritance reserved for you in heaven"—and especially do not forget that the king of that country is the Brother who came from heaven to make you sons and daughters of God, who knows of your sorrow, and is, even when you are under it, preparing to dry your tears.



### *A DOOR IN HEAVEN*

I KNEW a young creature once, who was still only a girl in age, but yet was old enough to be a widow. She had many sorrows in her short life. She was very poor, and she was very lonely.

As I was her minister, I used to visit her from time to time. And sometimes she would tell me little bits of her life.

There was one little bit about a door in heaven, which I think of as often as I remember her. That bit of her life belonged to the time when she was a child.

Child though she was, not more than nine or ten years old, she was sent out, as many of the children of the poor in the village were, to watch the cattle on an up-country

farm. It was very lonesome work for a child. She had to be in the fields by herself from early morning till evening, out of sight of the farmhouse, out of hearing of the farm work, with only the cows for company.

One summer day the air was hot, the birds had gone to their nests, only the bees were humming, my little friend began to sing a hymn. I do not remember what hymn it was, but it had a chorus. And suddenly, as often as she came to the chorus, she noticed that there was a sound above her as of singing. At first it was faint and far away. But by-and-by it seemed to come nearer, and then it sounded as if it were coming from the voice in the sky. And always it was the chorus that was sung. It did not last long. She herself grew tired of singing in the heat. She sang her last chorus very faintly. There was a faint echo of it above. Then all was still. But just then—she used to tell it to me with awe—just then she heard quite

plainly the sound of a door being shut in the sky.

It was only a vision, perhaps a dream, and she did not know she had dreamed. But to her it always seemed, as she looked back upon it, a very real event. She believed that the door of heaven had opened for her, for one short while, on that summer day. And in the echo of the chorus she herself had sung she believed that she had heard a little burst of the music of heaven. Quite seriously she said to me, "Perhaps the voice I heard that day was the voice of an angel!" And she never had any doubt that the door which she heard shutting in the sky was the same which John saw opened when he, too, was lonely in Patmos.

As I have said, perhaps it was only a dream. But dream though it may have been, I never look back on the loneliness of that poor young widow, or recall this story of her childhood, but I also think of the door in heaven which John saw opened

when he was in Patmos. He looked up one day and beheld a door in heaven, and out of it when it was opened came bursts of music.

And that is just what one would expect to hear if a door were opened in heaven. Heaven is filled with music. Choirs of angels and redeemed men, with trumpeters and harpers, are making melody there continually. When John looked through the open door, he saw a throne, and Christ sitting on it. And round about the throne stood a great multitude, singing songs of thanks and praise; and outside of these, in wide circles, stretching far away, other multitudes caught up the chorus, and cried "Amen."

It is many years since my widowed friend told me the story of the door in heaven and the singing she heard. But often the memory of it comes back to me. And this year I had a vision myself which once more recalled it.

I was living in a farm on the banks of



the Spey. Looking out from the front of the house we saw a long stretch of the Grampians, and between the mountains and the hill on which the farm is built a great wide valley, gleaming with stretches of purple heather and yellow corn and fields of bright green, the great Spey River flowing in the midst. The weather for some weeks was very dismal. Dark clouds hung low in the sky, and mountain and valley and river were blotted out of view. One day the darkness was almost like night. Above us nothing but black clouds. Around us only the lashing of the rain on the window-panes. We sat over our peat fire and tried to fill the hours with reading and talk. It was in the afternoon of that day I happened to look across the darkness to where the Braemar Pass opens in the mountains. And just there, above the pass, I saw a tiny break in the gloom. Then it grew larger. And in less time than it takes me to tell it there was an opening like a door. And through that door came a stream of the



clearest and richest light. In a moment everything began to look different. The light grew. It spread over the sky. The dark clouds burst asunder in twenty different places, and blue depths shone within. The birds began to sing. Before an hour had passed every sign of the miserable day had disappeared. It was a new world.

How beautiful everything was now! And all the beauty had come out of that door in heaven.

I thought of the first time light shone on the earth. It must have been like the very scene I had seen. Up till that moment everything resembled the dismal day on the banks of the Spey. Everything was covered with darkness. No sun rose in the morning. No moon shone by night. The stars did not give their light. The waves of the sea heaved and fell in darkness. The hills and valleys over all the earth were black.

"Let there be light," God said. And at His word a door was opened in heaven and light came forth. Sunrise and sunset, moon-

light and starlight, and beautiful rainbows came. The whole world was covered with colour. A new look came on the sea. Thousands of little waves sparkled and danced on its surface near the shores. And far out, it rose in long billows of green with foaming crests of white. The hills also became new to look at. Shadows that seemed alive moved up and down upon their sides. And they were seen to be clothed with garments of red and grey, and purple and green. And far and near, over earth and sea, everything put on a beauty which did not exist till the light appeared.

"O door of heaven," I said to myself, "what a gift thou art from God!" What a dreary place earth would be if the door of light had never opened! Human beings could not live in it. Boys and girls could not play in it. Birds could not sing in it. Flowers could not grow in it. No purple heather could shine on the hills, nor yellow corn grow in the fields. Nobody likes dark rooms, or dark stairs, or dark streets, or

dark roads. Nobody likes to be alone in the dark. Light is pleasant to the eye. It is life. And this good gift of God, this that is so pleasant to the eye and life, this that makes our homes bright and the earth all fair, and creates sunrise and rainbow, comes to us every day, an angel of God, out of the door of morning light in heaven.

## CHAPTER ON HYMNS

WORSHIPPING in a cathedral some time since, I was struck by the fact that the first hymn sung was written by a Presbyterian, the second by a Wesleyan. When I open one of our new hymn-books and find it has hymns of all ages, of all Churches, and of all creeds, we have got so far in the sphere of worship as to know that all these hymns and psalms are ours, because they are God's.

### THE "TE DEUM"

Not long ago I was walking in the avenue of trees at Hampton Court Palace. The trees there are very old, some of them with only the merest shell and bark left, but still with leaves.

A place to go out and walk in, a place for friends to walk together in, the branches close overhead giving grateful shadow in hot summer days.

I said to myself, "Cardinal Wolsey walked here, Henry the Eighth walked here, and lords and ladies three hundred years ago. Oliver Cromwell walked here, kings and queens, statesmen and generals. And lately the lads and lasses of London out for a holiday, and humble tourists like myself."

There it stands—a lovely quiet spot—for hundreds of years, and the people who walked in it, except the present generation, are all dead.

I am going to speak to you of a hymn which is just like that lovely walk. It has been sung in the churches for 1,400 years. Certainly, all down those years its grand words went up to God. The generations who first sang it are on the earth no more. The kings, the queens, the soldiers, the sailors, the labouring men, the poor women, they all died; but this hymn remains, and



those who are here living may sing it to-day.

Nobody could tell me who planted the tree-walk at Hampton Court, and nobody knows who wrote this hymn. I must not say that; God knows. But it is not known among men. Of the one who wrote it, we only know that he lived, that he loved God, and that he searched out good things to say concerning God. He found some of the expressions in the Bible, some in old books, some in his own heart. All he found must have passed through his heart, and then he reproduced them all in this hymn.

When I was a child, I learned in the mother's catechism who was the oldest man, and the strongest man, and the wisest man, and some day, when you grow up, you will hear it asked which is the greatest hymn.

The greatest hymn in the world, the greatest hymn ever sung by men, is this—the Te Deum.

It is called the Te Deum because, at first, it was a Latin hymn; and the two

first words of the hymn in Latin are *Te Deum*. Those words are the third and fourth in our English translation. They first mean "Thee, O God"—"We praise Thee, O God."

There are some who think that we have in this hymn three hymns joined together.

One part is the praise of Christ—down to verse 21.

From 22 to 26, translation of a Greek hymn.

And third, Latin verses from the Latin Bible.

But others think we have only two hymns—first, down to verse 21; second, separate verses from Bible to the close.

The praise of God, the praise of earth, the praise of heaven, the praise of angels, the praise of saints once on earth.

The story of Christ, whose Son He is, how He came from heaven and was Mary's Son, how He died for us, how He opened heaven for us, how He is now on the throne of God.

And then, in the last eight verses, prayers for blessings of different kinds.

Every child should learn this hymn by heart.

“NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE”

The late Mr. Maurice used to maintain that the basis of Christian union was to be found, not in creeds but in hymns, or, as he put it, the differing Churches are one in worship, although divided in beliefs.

And although that could not be held as either a thorough principle, or an accurate fact, there was a certain measure of truth in it. You have only to examine the hymns in any modern hymn-book, and you will find that all the churches we know are represented in the hymns we sing: the Greek Church, the Church of Rome, the Church of England, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregational Churches.

The hymn we are to consider just now was written by a member of a Unitarian Church. It is an interesting fact that there

are Unitarians who like our most evangelical hymns, like "Rock of Ages." And it is not wonderful that in that Church there should be found bursts of pious worship in which other Churches can join.

The writer of this hymn was a lady—Miss Sarah Fuller Flower while unmarried; Mrs. Bridger Adams in her married life.

Mrs. Adams was a very pious lady, and it was noted of her that she died singing praise to God.

Few hymns are better liked than this. Few have touched hearts more, or drawn people together more when sung, and many stories are told of the cheer it has given to people in distress.

During the American war, a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church was driven from his home, and was wandering through the wilds of Arkansas. He was passing an old log cabin, and heard some one singing. It was "Nearer, my God, to Thee," sung by a poor old woman, and then his despondence vanished.



In the same war, after the battle of Fort Donelson, a little drummer boy who had an arm shot off was dying. But as his death approached, he took up "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and sang it to the end.

It was the favourite hymn of General Garfield, and at his burial, as contingent after contingent arrived at the place of graves, and formed part of the procession which carried the body to its resting place, each took up and joined in the singing of this hymn, the immense multitude feeling as they sang that though laying the body in the dust, they were witnessing to the fact that the dead President had gone nearer to God.

Now let us sing it with heart.

"JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL "

*(Charles Wesley, 1740)*

It is said that Mr. Charles Wesley, seated at his desk one day, opened the window, when a bird pursued by a hawk flew into



the room. The hawk did not dare to follow, and Mr. Wesley took his pen and wrote this hymn.

Henry Ward Beecher said he would rather have written this hymn than have the fame of all the kings that ever sat on thrones. He would rather be the author of it than the richest man in New York. "The richest men will die," he said; "but this hymn will never die." Ever on it goes singing, till the last trumpet shall raise the dead. Many have been comforted by the lines—

"Other refuge have I none,  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

Several years back, a ship was burned near the English Channel, and among the passengers were a father, mother, and child. When the fire broke out, there was great confusion; the father was rescued and taken to Liverpool; the mother and child were flung into the sea. Nobody noticed them. The mother caught hold of a fragment of wreck; clasped her child to her breast. She

held fast to the piece of wood, drifted out with the tide, and late in the afternoon a Welsh vessel, going from Newport to America, came near. The captain saw an object in the water, sent out a boat, and as they came near heard the words sung by the poor mother:—

“Jesus, Lover of my soul.”

The sailors rescued her and the child, took them to America, and four months after her husband joined them there.

There are many stories of the effect of this hymn.

On one occasion, when Mr. Spurgeon preached in Exeter Hall, he said: “An ungodly stranger came into one of our services, and this hymn was sung: ‘Jesus, Lover of my soul.’ He said: ‘Does Jesus love *my* soul? Then why should I be in enmity to Him any longer?’”

I advise you all to learn this hymn by heart.

There are different things which different

people learn and know, and among these I have known people who were great in knowing pictures of hills and valleys, and they could tell you the good things in a good picture, the bad things in a bad picture.

And I have known people who were great in the knowledge of the hills and valleys which the painters put into their pictures.

This hymn was written by a man who was great in the knowledge of God, our Creator, who made both the painters and the hills they paint; who made horses and dogs, and everything we see; and who sent Jesus into the world to be our Saviour.

“MY GOD, HOW WONDERFUL THOU ART”

This is one of Faber's hymns. He is the author of “Souls of men, why will ye scatter?” “O Paradise, O Paradise,” and others in our Church hymn-books.

Mr. Faber was a descendant of the Huguenots—the French Protestants, who suffered great persecution, and many of whom fled

to England for refuge from the cruelty of their own countrymen. He was born at the vicarage of Calverley, Yorkshire, where his grandfather was vicar.

Early in his life he lost both father and mother.

When at college, he had great troubles. Mr. Newman (the late Cardinal Newman) was there at the same time, and through his influence young men began to ask themselves whether it was right to be in the Church of England, and whether it was not better to be in the Church of Rome.

In a few years the young student had become himself a clergyman of the English Church. But one November evening he told the people of his congregation that he could no longer remain in the Church of England, and next day he entered the Church of Rome.

After that till his death he was a Roman Catholic priest, first in Birmingham, then in London, and in 1863, when only forty years of age, he died.



He was a very holy man, he loved God, he loved to think of God; this hymn showed his wonderful view of God, and so simple.

“Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord,  
Almighty as Thou art;  
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me  
The love of my poor heart.”

He once said: “It is a great mercy of God to allow any one to do the least thing to bring souls nearer to Him.”

He was pleased and thankful that God permitted this hymn to be of some good to such.

He loved to think of God as round about the soul. In one hymn he says:—

“Thus does Thy hospitable greatness lie  
Outside us like a boundless sea;  
We cannot lose ourselves when all is Thine.  
Nor drift away from Thee.

“Thus does Thy grandeur make us grand ourselves,  
'Tis goodness only bids us fear,  
Thy greatness makes us brave as children are  
When those they love are near.”



And in the hymn "Souls of Men," you will remember the verses—

"There is no place where earth's sorrows  
Are more felt than up in heaven ;  
There is no place where earth's failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.

"If our love were but more simple,  
We would take God at His word,  
And our lives would be all sunshine,  
In the sweetness of our Lord."

#### "ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY"

The writer of this beautiful hymn was the wife of Dr. Alexander, Bishop of Derry. She has written many hymns for children.

She was an Irish lady, the daughter of a soldier, and the wife of a Christian minister.

When we come on a hymn so beautiful as this, we stop to ask, Have we any more from the same pen ?

Yes; in our hymn-book we have for grown-up people a hymn by the same authoress, that is just like a diamond for perfection.

"When, wounded sore, the stricken soul  
Lies bleeding and unbound,  
One only hand, a piercèd hand,  
Can salve the sinner's wound.

"When sorrow swells the laden heart,  
And tears of anguish flow,  
One only heart, a broken heart,  
Can feel the sinner's woe," etc.

"Once in royal David's city," is one of the finest hymns for children in the book.

"Once in royal David's city  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby,  
In a manger for His bed.  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ her little Child.

"He was little, weak, and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us He knew,  
And He feeleth for our sadness,  
And He shareth in our gladness."

"We are but little children weak," is another delightful hymn by Mrs. Alexander.

"There's not a child so small and weak,  
But has her little cross to take,  
Her little work of love and praise,  
That she may do for Jesus' sake."

## "HAPPY LAND"

One day a young man heard a lady playing an Indian air on the piano and singing a silly worldly song.

He was struck with the beauty of the melody, and he was led to make a Christian song to put to the music.

He was a teacher. He introduced it to his own class. Then he let it forth for public use, and since then it has been sounding up and down through the world. It is sung by children in many languages, and is still doing good.

Few knew the author. Only after many years he was known to be Mr. Andrew Young, who died recently in Edinburgh.

A great preacher once said that he would rather be the author of that one hymn than be the greatest earl of Christendom.

Yes; one would like to have done a thing like that. It is sung in the schools in China, where our ladies teach.

And it has already done a good deal of work for God. In the Black Swamp of America lived a very wicked man. He did not believe that he was made by God. He said: "There is no God." Though he was very rich yet he was very ungodly.

But trouble came to his home. First his wife died, then his daughter died, then the daughter's husband. There remained with him only a little grandchild, a girl. She went to a day school and learned to read.

Then the grandfather allowed her to go to a Sunday school, and there she learned this hymn.

One evening the old man listened; he melted a little by-and-by; he came to see that he had been very wicked. Then in his old days he became a Christian.

Thus a little child led him to Christ.

There is a good deal of attention paid just now to this hymn. What I have told you is taken from an account of the author of this hymn, who, as I have said, died quite recently in Edinburgh.



## "JUST AS I AM"

A good hymn is like the words from the life.

This is a hymn that comes from the life of the writer. It is actually the story of her soul's life. Early in life she became an invalid. She was about thirty years of age when she wrote it. A famous minister of Geneva, Dr. Cæsar Malan, came on a visit to her father, and he found Charlotte an invalid, and trying to work out her own salvation, and unwilling to trust Christ; she wanted to be good first and then go to Christ.

Dr. Malan said to her: "Dear Charlotte, cut the cable; it will take too long to unloose it. Cut it; it is a small loss; the wind blows, and the ocean is before you, the Spirit of God and Eternity." He meant her to leave everything and throw herself on Christ. Well, she did this, and the hymn tells the story.



"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

You see the hymn grew out of her life.  
She found Christ, and she sings of Christ.

And it is a hymn very precious to all  
who have found Christ. Every child should  
know the first and second verses.

Many, many years ago, after a serious  
illness, I went to Malvern. One Lord's Day  
I was taken to a room where worship was  
held. The sermon was very poor, worse  
than poor—irritating. But this hymn was  
given out. It was the first time I had seen  
it, and I feel the joy and blessing of it to  
this day. It is a great thing to hear good  
hymns.

A little street waif in New York came to  
a city missionary once with a soiled and

crumpled sheet of paper on which this hymn was printed. His father had sent him for a clean copy. The soiled one was found in the pocket of his sister who had died, and the father had been so affected by it, that he desired a fresh copy.

The son-in-law of Wordsworth wrote to the author to say that it had been a great comfort to his wife on her deathbed.

When he read it to her first, she said: "That is the very thing for me."

At least ten times a day she asked him to repeat it. She would repeat it after him line by line, day and night.

About thirty years ago, a lady passing through Geneva called at a clergyman's house, but did not find him at home. She left eighty francs for him, with a request that he would print and circulate the French translation. It has frequently been translated into Latin.

The writer of the hymn, a lady called Charlotte Elliott, was born about one hundred years ago in Brighton.

“LEAVE GOD TO ORDER ALL THY WAYS”

Soon after the ending of the Thirty Years' War on the Continent, there lived a young man at Hamburg who gained his living by playing on the violin.

After a while he fell sick and was reduced to great poverty, till at last he had nothing left but his violin, and went to a Jew to pledge it. Having got what money he could for it, he was coming away, when, looking back at the violin, he said to the shop-keeper, “You don't know how hard it is to part with that instrument! For ten years it has been my companion and comforter. At my worst it always sang back to me.” His voice grew thick; then, seizing the violin, he began to play, and to sing one of his own hymns. Then laying it down on the counter again, he rushed out of the shop. As he did so, he stumbled against a person listening in the doorway, and would have passed, but the stranger stopped him and asked, “Where can I get a copy of that hymn? I will give a florin for it.”

"You shall have it," the lad said, thankfully.

The person Neumark had stumbled against was the chamberlain to the Swedish ambassador, and he was a godly man and a lover of hymns and music.

The chamberlain introduced the lad to the notice of the ambassador, who was so greatly interested in him that he took him into his service as secretary; and ultimately he rose to be librarian and keeper of the archives at Weimar.

As soon as Neumark got back his violin from the Jew, he called his neighbours into his poor room, and played and sang this hymn as a farewell. One of them said to him, "Did you make that hymn yourself, George?" He replied, "Well, I am the instrument, but God swept the strings, and all I know is that these words—'Who trusts in God's unchanging love,' lay like a sweet burden on my heart. I went over them again and again, and so they shaped themselves into this song—how, I cannot tell.



I began to sing and to play for joy, and my soul blessed the Lord, and word followed word like water from a fountain."

The hymn was this:—

"Leave God to order all thy ways,  
And hope in Him whate'er betide,  
Thou'lt find Him in the evil days  
Thy all-sufficient Strength and Guide.  
Who trusts in God's unchanging love,  
Builds on the Rock that cannot move.

"He knows when joyful hours are best,  
He sends them as He sees it meet,  
When thou hast borne the fiery test,  
And art made free from all deceit,  
He comes to thee all unaware,  
And makes thee feel His loving care.

"Nor, in the heat of pain or strife,  
Think God hath cast thee off unheard,  
And that the man whose prosperous life  
Thou enviest is of Him preferred.  
Time passes, and much change doth bring,  
And sets a bound to everything.

"Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways,  
But do thine own part faithfully;  
Trust His rich promises of grace,  
So shall they be fulfilled in thee.  
God never yet forsook at need  
The soul that trusted Him indeed.



"Only thy restless heart keep still,  
And wait in cheerful hope, content  
To take whate'er His gracious will,  
His all-discerning love, hath sent,  
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known  
To Him who chose us for His own."

## CHRISTMAS

*Isaiah xi. 6, 7*

CHRIST MAS! *Mas* is an old word, going out of use now, but it meant, when it was young like you, a heap; then the heap of good things on a dinner or supper table, then the enjoyment of these good things—a feast, and the feasting of the people.

And with the change of one letter the word *mas* is still used in something like its old way by officers in the army; those who dine together in the army call themselves when they are dining *the mess*.

And on the ships that go to sea the common sailors, because they take their food at one table, call their companions there their *messmates*.

Well, Christmas is the feast-day of the

birth of Christ, the "mas" or feast that is to remind us that Christ was born, and all who join in this feast are massmates or messmates, brothers and sisters who hold the feast.

At first, that is after Christ's death, there was really a feast; there was the same feast which is now called the Lord's Supper. People met in each other's houses for the breaking of bread, and sometimes they broke bread to remember the birth of Christ, and sometimes to remember His death.

But by-and-by the eating of bread ceased, except at the Lord's Supper; so it came to be called the Feast, the Mass, and now we call it Christmas.

Well, this is a feast-day. And our feast in the Church is a feast of worship and wholesome thought about the birth of Jesus. And we are met to hold that feast. And therefore, like the sailors in their ships, we are messmates to-day; we are brothers and sisters holding the feast.

One thing is always beautiful to me in

Christmas. In our country it comes in the very depth of our winter, just three days after the shortest day, just in the very midst of the longest nights, when snow and frost and fog and miserable weather come.

Right down into the midst of such weather drops the blessed Christmas Day, and holly is hung about our lamps, and our picture-frames, and in our halls. And it seems as if summer had bloomed for us in the very depth of winter.

A bright, summer-like day, bright with everything happy-like, dropped right down among the sad, miserable days.

Now that is like a parable. It is just like the coming of Christ into the fallen world. He came into a world on which winter deep and black lay, and He came to bring Paradise back.

Therefore this is a day to be happy in. It is a day to remember Christ.

I once before told some of you a story about Goldnes. But to-day I shall tell it over again as a story of Christ.

Goldnes was the child that came down from heaven into the green forest with his blue eyes, his golden hair, his silver-white dress.

A bird-catcher saw him, and said to himself: "That is the lad for me"; so he seized him, and bound him, and made him his slave, and Goldnes served him a year and a day.

One day the bird-catcher said to the lad: "Take the bow and arrow and go into the wood and shoot me a bird."

And Goldnes took bow and arrow and went into the wood, and he brought back a finch with wings of silver and feathers of gold, and said: "Master, see!"

But the master was a heathen, and when he saw this beautiful bird—this bird of heaven—and not a bird all bleeding from its wound, he cried: "It is magic; thou art a wizard"; and with that he beat his poor slave, and drove him away from his house.

So Goldnes wandered through the green forest a second time, and as he was passing



a great garden the master of it saw him, and he said, "This is the lad for me"; so he caught him, and bound him, and made a slave of him, and he served the gardener a year and a day.

"Come now," said his master one day, "go into the wood and fetch me a stem or stock for grafting this rose."

And Goldnes went, and brought back a briar stem with a rose of gold upon it, just as if it had grown in the garden of heaven.

But the gardener was a heathen, too, and when he saw this wondrous briar, he thought it was magic, and that Goldnes was a wizard, and he beat him and drove him from the house.

So Goldnes was once more free. He went through the green forest till he came to the open land, and there, shining like silver, lay the sea, with ships floating on its bosom.

He saw a little vessel, and near it a man mending nets on the shore.

So Goldnes stepped on board.

"Just the lad for me," said the fisher-

man, and with that he let go the cable and set up the sail and went out to sea.

Then he said: "My lad, drop thy hook into the sea."

So Goldnes let down the line, and the hook caught something, and he pulled and pulled and at last pulled up and into the ship, not a fish but a gold crown all glittering with jewels.

Now the fisherman was not a heathen, but a pious seeker of the Lord. And when he saw the crown, he said: "This is the lost crown of the Kingdom of Heaven, and he who recovers it from where it has been lost is to be our King"; and the fisherman cried aloud, "Hail, King from Heaven."

And the fisherman sent the tidings out to other ships, and then drew swiftly in to the shore, and by-and-by the land was all astir with people coming down to the shore in order to welcome the new King.

"And Goldnes was set on the throne.  
And the crown was set on his head,  
And the people cried :  
'O king, live for ever.'"

And, as I said, that is the story of Jesus Christ.

He came as the *Word* of God in the days of Nimrod and the Babel builders.

Then He came in the days of the prophets.

But it was not till He met some pious fishermen, who recognised Him as the promised Messiah, that Christ was proclaimed the Son of God.

So this is the day to remember our Divine Goldnes, the Child from Heaven, who from the deeps in which the lost lie lifted a crown from Heaven.

On Christmas Day we must begin and end with Christ.

Christmas is the day when we think of Christ as a Babe.

Now you know that He was born in Bethlehem: but He was brought when still a Baby to Nazareth, and was brought up there.

Now when we are thinking of Jesus, we always think of Him as in a sunny land,

sunny all the year through. And I think I never saw pictures of Him, except that picture of the storm on the lake, in which He was not under sunny skies, and palm trees, and beautiful flowers.

And perhaps there is not one child here who ever thought of our Lord as having to wade through snow, as having felt the cold of snow, as having seen the snow falling.

But now, it is this I wish to tell you this morning.

Nazareth has one thing which makes it different from other places mentioned in the New Testament.

Snow falls in Palestine in January and February: and sometimes will be a foot in depth.

The snow lies longer about Nazareth than anywhere else.

Nazareth is a village among hills. Not unlike the Cumberland hills, only not so high.

Our Lord then saw the beautiful sight of snow we sometimes see in winter.

Our Lord has been in a snowstorm.

Our Lord has had to go to church through the snow.

When journeying along Lebanon, He would see it in the ravines till far on in summer.

We are always getting new ideas about our Lord.

Now it will be a new thought to you to think of the Child Jesus taken out to see the falling snow — to think of the Man Jesus sometimes going to His works of mercy through the snow.



### *A CHRISTMAS HOMILY*

ONCE more it is Christmastide, and we have all been back in Bethlehem, listening with the shepherds to the song of the angels in the sky. It is the greatest song that was ever sung on earth. It is the birth-song of our Lord. Other singers, in the far-back years, had told of His coming. And at last, long waited for, He came.

A poor maiden in a lowly village was His mother, a maiden holy and pure and full of good thoughts. Be sure she was a beautiful girl. Certainly, she had a beautiful soul. In her heart was the love of God. She knew and had sung the old songs. She herself had already sung a song

that will be sung in the Church to the end of the world. She knew that one day a Child should be born who would be God's King of men. And she, this fair maiden, this soul pure and holy, was the mother of this Child.

A thousand wonderful things were to show themselves in this Child when He grew up. But even as a Child He was wonderful. The greatest wonder was that, unlike other children, He was without sin. He was a holy Child. Heaven was in His heart when He was born, and the beginnings of the love of God, and the truth and holiness of God. No evil tempers, no wrong wishes, no wilful ways, were ever found in Him. From His birth to His death He did no evil. He was holy as God is holy.

He did no sin, because He was the dwelling-place of God. I cannot put right words on this. I can only look upon it and speak of it as one standing far back from the glory. But poorly though I tell of it,

it is true and very glorious. The great Creator who made the hills and the seas and the stars, who fills all space, made His home in the Child of whom the angels sang. Yes, that Child, so weak, so lowly to look upon, and as He lay in the manger, was the dwelling-place of God. Wonderful though it be to say it, that Child was also a vision of God. Looking upon that Child was the nearest that man ever came to looking upon God. It was God showing Himself in a Babe. He made Himself to know weakness in the weakness of that Child, and hunger in the hunger of that Child, and clinging of human heart to heart in the clinging of that Baby to His mother. In the days of Moses God showed Himself by mighty works, by great judgments on Pharaoh and his soldiers. In the Child at Bethlehem He showed Himself in the weakness and yearning of an infant.

Perhaps that will explain the first wonder I have named. That may help you to understand how He was a sinless Child. A

Child who was the dwelling-place of the holy God could not be other than a holy Child.

But now I have to tell you of a second wonder. Although this Child was a holy Child, and knew no sin and did no sin; although sin was in His sight a very evil thing, yet when He grew up to be a Man, and began to speak for God, He became the Friend of sinners.

There were people at that time who could not understand this. It seemed to them that holy people should be the friends of holy people only. They said: "This man cannot be good all through if he goes near to evil-doers as he does." They had not learned that one of the strongest desires in the heart of holy people is to turn sinful people from their sin. Jesus went near to souls vexed with sin to turn them from their sin. He went to poor prodigals and to women who had wandered far from God to bring them back to God. Next to His joy in obeying His Father in heaven was His joy in bring-



ing sinful souls into the light of His Father's love. "I came for that very end," He said. But it remained a mystery to the people I have referred to. And they said in anger: "This man—he is no saint—no true prophet—he receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

And the Lord did that very thing. He received sinners and ate with them. Now it is this I want to make plain to you. This is a real Christmas truth. I want to show you how glorious a thing it is in Christ, and how gladsome a thing it is for us, that He is such a Saviour as the people of Jerusalem blamed Him for being. And I think I shall show you this best by telling a little bit of a young Christian's life.

About thirty years ago there was living in Bath a young lady who was in great distress about her soul. She was seventeen. She had a happy home. She had all the good things the world can give. She had loving friends, she lived in a fine mansion, she drove in carriages, she had money to



spend in dress; but a great shadow had fallen upon her soul, and she was in misery. Her life up till now had been a life of mere pleasure. She had sought her joys in theatres, in ball-rooms, in gay parties, in the reading of idle books. And one day it was borne in upon her soul that she had loved pleasure better than God. It was worse than that. She had loved pleasure and not God.

Her health broke down. Her friends tried to cheer her, but in vain. She felt herself alone in the world. And she *was* alone. God was leading her into a wilderness that He might draw her to Himself. In her loneliness she turned to the Bible and read it day and night. She prayed. She went to church. She cried to God to have mercy on her and save her. She was very earnest in her cry. But she did not yet know the God to whom she was sending up her cry.

One Sunday evening, with this black shadow still upon her soul, she went to church. The Communion Table was spread

that evening. "Oh," she said in her heart, "I am not worthy to take part in that, I am so great a sinner." And while this thought was still working in her heart, the minister gave out the text. It was as if heaven were thrown open to her. The text was: "This Man receiveth sinners." A great surprise, and then a great joy, flashed suddenly into her soul. "In that case He will receive me," she said to herself, "for I am a sinner." It was a new vision of the Saviour, a new vision of salvation itself. Now she saw that Jesus was the Saviour of sinners; that He came to save such as she. "Just as I am," she cried, "sinner as I am, He will receive me." The shadow lifted from her soul. Light from God flowed in. The Friend of sinners had received her. That evening she waited for the Communion.

This brings me to a third wonder. It is an endless wonder to me that there are still so many sinners in the world. Is sin stronger than the Saviour of sinners? Oh, nobody can think that. Do men love sin

better than the Saviour? That cannot be all the explanation.

I will tell you one cause why so many sinners are still unsaved. To save sinners, the people who try to do it must love one another. The people who are trying do not yet love one another as they should. They love their Churches and the customs of their Churches more than the brothers and sisters of Christ. They are not one fold, as they were intended to be; but many. And each says: "We are the true fold, and we alone." It is a great sorrow to the Saviour, we may be sure. And it is a great shame.

I read this story once in the book of a Prussian doctor.

In the beginning of the world the Lord and His human creatures had happy times together. He came to see them in the garden, and they heard His voice in the cool of the day. And sometimes in the evening they heard Him playing on His harp, and His angels singing the song of heaven.

But the happy time came to an end. The dwellers in the garden grew tired of their happiness. They sought out a happiness for themselves. "We shall be happier," they said, "if we have our own way in things." And they turned to their own way. The Lord came no more into the garden. The harp was silent. And the song of heaven was not heard.

Great sorrow fell on the hearts of men. They wanted still to go on in their own way. But they wished to have back the music of heaven. And they cried: "Give us back the song of heaven." The Lord took pity on them. And the angels tore some leaves out of the Divine music-book, and dropped a leaf here and another there among the sons of men. And for a time there was joy on the earth. But only for a time. Every family who received a leaf began to declare that only the leaf they received was music of heaven. Other families said the same. And soon the world was filled with hatred. The people of one



leaf hated the people of other leaves, and called them evil names.

At last the long years of the human race drew to an end, and it was the Day of Judgment. And once more the Lord came down among men. And once more they heard the sounding of His harp, and the great sweet song of heaven. And oh, then their hearts were filled with fear and shame. They found that the separate leaves on which they prided themselves were only little fragments of the song. And for these mere fragments they had spent their precious years in hatred of their brethren, instead of joining together with them in praising the Lord and fighting His battle against sin.

Dear boys and girls, through this simple parable, learn why more sinners are not turned to God. The people who should be busy working for God in bringing sin to an end are busy defending their divisions. They have so much to do, trying to show that only they are the people of God, that



they have no time left to bring sinners into His family.

Oh, dear boys, who knows whether among you, to whom I speak, there may not be one who shall some day sound a trumpet for God and call His sundered people into one great army? And they shall be ashamed of their divisions, and of their pride in their divisions, and of their contempt of one another, and with their whole heart and soul they shall give themselves to the battle of battles, the battle against sin, and to the blessed work of turning sinners to God.



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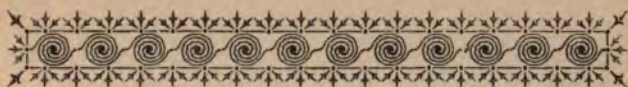
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